



THE

*LIMITS OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY*



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THE LIMITS  
OF  
INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

An Essay

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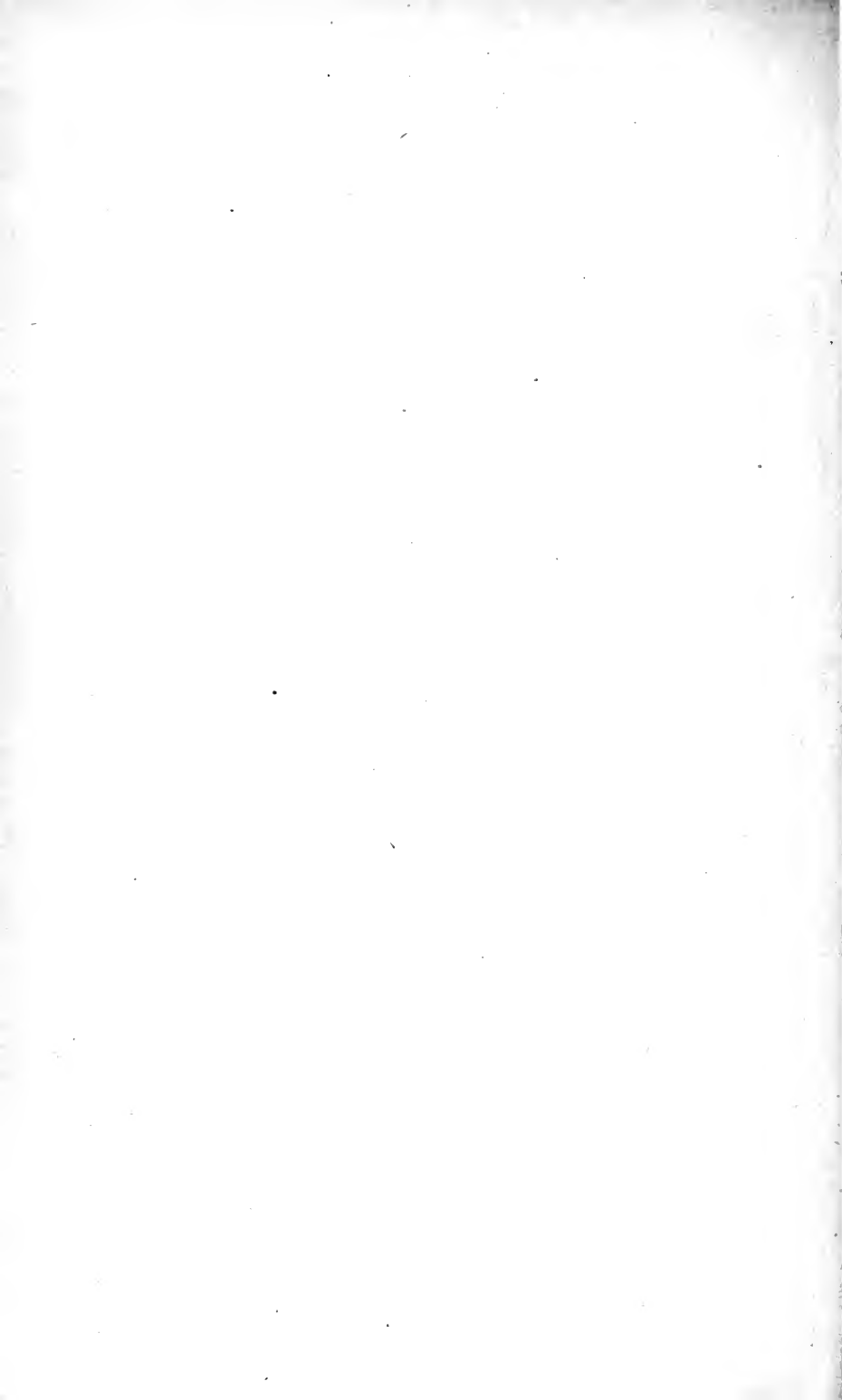
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## *PREFATORY NOTE.*

INDIVIDUAL freedom and the function of the State have recently been topics of much controversy, not only among those who speculate upon politics, but among practical politicians in Parliament and in the newspapers. In these discussions all parties necessarily make many assumptions which require no small pains to define and verify. Every solution of a particular problem must imply general principles, and every general principle must have its place in a theory. A complete theory of individual liberty and the function of the State is a complete political philosophy; and a philosophy of politics involves a philosophy of things in general. The following essay does not pretend to be complete or to be philosophic. It merely aims at carrying political reflection one or two stages beyond the point reached by those whose sole interest is in party politics. It cannot assist the scientific inquirer; but it may interest some of those who like to criticize their own opinions. Such persons there are even in our own country; and if they find anything suggestive in this volume, it will have fulfilled the wishes of its author.

F. C. M.

OCTOBER, 1884.



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I.

*INTRODUCTION.*



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FOR many years past, in our own as well as in other European countries, political energy has been chiefly directed to the attainment of individual freedom. The most celebrated reformers have been those who abridged the exorbitant power of classes, corporations, and sects ; who liberated trade, liberated education, liberated religion ; who very nearly secured to all men the enjoyment of equal civil and political rights. Many of these great men believed that when we had finally abolished all needless restraint and all unmeaning privilege we should have attained to a condition of society in which statesmen would have nothing more to do. They thought as nobly of their fellows as they thought meanly of institutions. In a more sober form they reproduced the brilliant paradox of the French Revolution : that the individual is very good, that society is very bad. Leave man, they said, to the monitions of his own unprejudiced reason, of his own warm and kindly instincts. These will guide him aright, whilst states and churches can only lead him astray. The only proper function of the state is to secure that order within and without which is indispensable if every man is to have an equal chance of doing what he likes. Society exists in order to make the individual free. Once the individual finds himself free, he will develop

everything which civilization requires. His unsatisfied desires will constrain to industry; the multitude of workers will involve competition; and competition will stimulate to their richest growth all the virtues and all the faculties of man. This doctrine may be called the doctrine of negative freedom. Few speculative doctrines have had so fair a trial in practice.

At the present day political and social perfection seem nearly as remote as ever; the ideal which we were about to clasp has melted in our embrace; and we begin to doubt whether the way of seeking after it, once so universally approved, was the only way or the best. For a century of enlarged individual freedom has done for human greatness or human happiness only a very small part of what its noblest advocates expected. They were convinced that by merely abolishing artificial restraints they could make a rich and vigorous type of character as common in the future as it had been rare in the past. They thought that individuality varies with the power to do and to say as we please. But here and in the United States of America, in our colonies, and in one or two continental countries, men enjoy almost as much of this power as can consist with any permanent social union. Yet those most inclined to take cheerful views may doubt whether our own age can count more illustrious individuals than might have been found in any one of the three preceding centuries. Such individuality as does exist is not most plentiful in the freest countries. Germany can still boast of two or three extraordinary individuals; the United States cannot show one. De Tocqueville and Mill were so mournfully impressed by the lack of character in their contemporaries that they almost despaired of the

fertility of the future. They seemed to resign themselves to the final disappearance of genius and heroism.

If individual freedom has not made greatness more common, neither has it made contentment more general. Were any candid critic asked to fix upon the most universal attribute of our generation, I think that he would name discontent, discontent in every form from the noblest to the meanest, from greed to aspiration. Restless and insatiable above all other ages is the age in which we live. This, too, in spite of means for the satisfaction of curiosity and appetite more abundant than men have enjoyed at any former period. Judged by any common-sense standard, Europe now possesses a happiness unparalleled in former times. Perhaps one of the numerous faction of common sense will have the courage of his convictions and say that Europe is as happy as she ought to be. If so, let him reflect one instant upon the complexion of the philosophic theories at present in favour, upon the tone of the best and most impressive art, and upon the feeling with which many citizens regard the constitution of their society.

Prosperous our contemporaries are beyond all precedent ; yet a formal pessimism finds to-day more adherents than such a creed ever found before, and an informal pessimism is so diffused as to infect many of the strongest minds. The most characteristic art of our age is penetrated with a melancholy which would be bitter were it not enervating. We are become enamoured of the literature of weakness and failure. We most relish the poetry and the painting which express an acquiescence at once mournful and voluptuous. And as for the temper which men cherish towards their society, this temper has been mellowed in England by the

habit of emigration, and by a legislation which habitually transgresses the principle of *laissez-faire*; but elsewhere people hitherto seem to have grown more and more discontented as they have attained to more and more freedom.

Discontent is just as often a good thing as a bad thing, and of the right sort of discontent we can never have too much. But our discontent may lead us to think that emancipation from restraint marks rather the beginning than the end of a great revolution in human affairs. Our disappointment justifies not the foolish and hopeless regret that society should continue to move, but a doubt as to whether we have rightly stated the law of social movement.

Our disappointment and our discontent were foretold. The struggle for freedom inspired some wise men with very mixed feelings. Unqualified freedom necessarily implies unlimited competition; and unlimited competition is not altogether pleasant or beautiful. Men of practical common sense enjoy it. But the poet and the saint are troubled with a yearning for unity, for peace, for a noble calm, and a fruitful endeavour. Enormous power spent in securing mean objects, energy cancelled by conflicting energy, weakness trampled under the feet of strength, and strength dissolved in the riot of its victory; all these things are of the very essence of unqualified competition; and these are the very things which most revolt the lover of the ideal: so that in his eyes much of our vaunted progress seems altogether futile. Our civilization has revolted many of our worthiest contemporaries. Some have utterly disavowed the idea of improvement, and have sought rest in the tomb of a dogmatic church. Others have found relief in constructing social Utopias, admirable in many respects, but

more hopeless than the Republic of Plato. And others have neither accepted nor created a world of phantoms, but have turned fiercely upon the world in which they were condemned to live, and have denounced its works with a prophetic power which made even worldlings tremble.

Had the men of an eminently devout or poetic nature stood alone in their protest against the negative freedom so much prized by their age, the age would have prevailed over their dissatisfaction. The poet or the saint was never yet so tempered as to have much pleasure in things as they are; nor has the existing world been moulded to suit the demands of their conscience or imagination. The practical life of man has ever been the roughest of compromises. Only too fortunate are we if it prove a compromise at all, and do not ruthlessly exclude all that can reconcile us to its burthens. But the state of affairs growing out of unlimited freedom and unlimited competition did not merely offend the taste or morality of a few. It made the many suffer until they doubted whether it must really endure for ever. Our modern Socialism expresses the practical revolt against the doctrine of negative freedom.

Socialism indeed means many things. Some socialists would not ask for more than a gradual development of the principles asserted in our own recent legislation. Other socialists are said to place their sole hope of social improvement in the immediate and forcible overthrow of all social institutions. Between these extremes, politicians and philanthropists of every imaginable quality are confounded under the general epithet of socialist. But for our present purpose it is enough to touch on the article of faith common to them all; that co-operation, not competition, is the true

principle of social life. The bearing of this doctrine upon the theory of political freedom is self-evident. For if the true freedom consist in leaving every man as much as possible to himself, then it is clear that the keenest competition is a wholesome state of things. But if co-operation is the law of progress, then co-operation involves organization; and it is not possible to organize men without making them do many things which they would not have done of their own free will.

Whether or no we like Socialism, we cannot help seeing that Socialism and freedom, as generally understood in England, rest on irreconcilable postulates. According to his temperament, to his knowledge of the actual condition of mankind, and to his power of severing the possible from the impossible, the socialist will vary in the extent of his demands for immediate improvement. But in all cases his ideal society is not one in which everybody is allowed to do what he likes so long as he inflicts no unquestionable injury upon his neighbours. Rather it is one in which each individual is expected by his private exertion to advance as well as he is able the positive welfare of his community. The conflict of these ideals has already affected our political life, as it must soon agitate the political life of the United States and of our colonies.

The preponderating political influence which formerly resided in the middle class, has been by degrees transferred to the labouring class. Reform Bills in England have a significance quite other than attaches to the grant of universal suffrage elsewhere. For the English labouring man, in working out his own emancipation, has undergone a political training. The continental labouring man has not



had the discipline of combination and discussion. He has the franchise, but he has not exerted a steady influence upon politics. Passive in times of prosperity, in hard times furious, he has not developed a habit of political energy. The English workman has some rough notion of what he really wants, what he really can get, and how he will best get it. With his advent to power, not only the political programme of the hour, but also the tone of society is sensibly modified. For our new practical maxims we shall find a new theoretical justification ; since in English politics, theory always lags behind practice.

When we look back upon the condition of England at the beginning of this century, we find that almost all effective political power and social influence were divided in unequal shares between the landowner and the capitalist. The landowner might not be in himself a greater force than the capitalist ; but the constitution of England had been shaped in ages when very great consequence attached to land, and very little consequence attached to capital. The capitalist thus found himself subordinated to the landowner by a body of artificial regulations which did not correspond with the balance of true political strength. Feeling that he was powerful, the capitalist wanted freely to use his power. He wanted liberty, individual liberty ; above all, liberty to carry on his business in whatever way he thought proper.

But the owner of capital resembled the owner of land at least in his individual strength. Whatever the form of his riches, the rich man in every law-abiding society will be able to take care of himself. So long as the aristocracy would consent to wield power in accordance with the ideas of men of business, so long as trade was free and taxation

light, so long as we remained at peace with the strong, and at the sword's point constrained the weak to buy our wares, so long the men of capital had little more to ask. Wealth was their object of desire, and wealth beyond the wildest dreams of avarice was theirs. Most of them had a merely personal ambition. They wished less to exalt their own class than to be admitted into the class above. They naturally embraced the politics of self-help and *laissez-faire*. The most earnest among them were often Nonconformists; and the peculiar spirit of Nonconformity, no less than the intolerance of the Established Church, tended rather to strengthen than to subdue in them an exaggerated sense of personal independence, as well as an undue admiration for individual energy.

But at the beginning of this century the relation of capitalist to landowner was just the reverse of the relation between labourer and capitalist when the century was half spent. In the one instance the strength of the antagonists was equal, the working of the law unequal; in the other instance the law was professedly impartial, but the combatants were not fairly matched. Collectively, no doubt, the workmen have greater bodily strength than all other sorts and conditions of people united. But each several workman is less powerful than his employer. As between rich and poor, an equal law gives free play to unequal force. Therefore, apart from any considerations of prudence or justice making this way or that, the natural impulse of the workman is to protect himself by legislation.

I have said that unlimited freedom implies unlimited competition. The advocates of freedom reposed so full a faith in the discipline of competition, that they were willing to

renew in all its primitive intensity, although under forms of modern civilization, the original struggle for existence. But they never could have convinced anybody who did not feel a tolerable assurance of victory. Men who cannot trust, each to his own right arm, men whose only hope of bettering their condition lies in mutual help, have no wish to make more bitter the conflict for life. They will do everything in their power to mitigate it, and if they can mitigate it by interfering with the individual will, they are the very last persons in the world to respect individual freedom.

Moreover, the social life of the capitalist is strongly distinguished from the social life of the workman. Individually weak, collectively irresistible, the workmen have long been accustomed to act in large masses, to submit to a severe discipline, which takes no account of personal tastes or inclinations, to place hardly any limit upon the will of the majority. The workman is ambitious rather for his class than for himself. Few workmen cherish any very strong desire to leave the condition of life into which they were born; but all workmen are determined to make that condition of life as easy and prosperous as circumstances will allow. As their ambition takes a social turn, so do their lighter inclinations. They care less for privacy, for quiet, for a select circle of intimates, than do the members of any other class. Probably they enjoy life as much as any other great body of human beings; but it is in a great body that they enjoy. Thus their amusements, their work, all the conditions of their life have somewhat abated the intensity of English reserve.

In the old world the nobles formed a corporation. The workmen aspire to form a corporation in the new. In the

old society all gentlemen were peers; for all were united by a similarity of education, of tastes, of recreations, and pursuits. All had the leisure to enjoy and the capacity for enjoyment. In such a society wealth did not, could not claim the exorbitant preponderance which it assumes in the mercantile world; for the poor and the weak were sustained by the riches and power of their order. The pride of class was stronger than individual pride. The life of the class was the life of all its members. Such was the ideal, more or less, realized by the nobles of the Middle Age; and some such ideal floats before the imagination of our more ambitious workmen.

Since the statesmen of a free nation are the courtiers of the people, it is not surprising that with the spirit of the constituencies, the spirit of their representatives should be transformed too. Whereas the reformers of the last generation sought to contract, the reformers of our own time are busy in enlarging the activity of the state. They have silently abandoned the principles of *laissez-faire* and individual freedom to espouse the principle of common action for the public good. One or two illustrations of their new policy may be permitted here.

In the first place, the state has recently interfered enormously with the natural distribution of wealth. Within the lifetime of the present generation the imperial revenue has increased by more than one-half, and the local revenue has more than doubled. Public money has been profusely spent in doing for our less prosperous citizens what they could not have done for themselves; not only by supporting the poorest out of the rates, but by providing for all the means of education and of health. At the same time the assessment

of taxation has been very much altered, and usually in such a way as to relieve small incomes at the expense of large. These departures from the policy of former times, although regretted by many, are held by almost all to have been inevitable. Nobody doubts that they will be followed by innovations of the same kind, but upon a scale heretofore unknown. Nobody can justify them upon old-fashioned principles of liberty.

In the second place, the state has interfered with the freedom of contract. It will be said by many Liberals that we have interfered with the freedom of contract only in cases in which one of the contracting parties was not really free. This fact, indeed, may justify our interference; but it is not enough to harmonize our new-fashioned practice with our old-fashioned theory. Such an apology as I have quoted admits the protection of individuals by the state. Those who make such an apology may think one sort of protection bad because unreasonable or unfair, another sort of protection good because just and reasonable, but they have debarred themselves from saying that protection merely as protection is mischievous. Whether the state, as in the Irish Land Act of 1881, establishes a public tribunal to determine for the contracting parties the terms of their contract, or, as in the Ground Game Act, declares that certain terms shall be inserted in every contract of a certain kind, or, as in the Factory Acts, forbids some contracts to be made at all; in every case it equally asserts its right to interfere with freedom of contract whenever such interference is likely to subserve the peace, the health, or the morals of the citizens.

Lastly we have interfered to educate those who cannot be

educated otherwise. Elementary education is now compulsory. It may yet come to be given gratis. Here we have a triple violation of the rules of social quietism. The state says to the parent, You shall not be free to let your child grow up ignorant and immoral. It then educates the unfortunate infant to the great prejudice of his natural individuality. Finally it constrains the ratepayer to pay for the education of other men's children, although he may honestly think that nobody should be educated without his parents' consent, or although he may regard the education given by the state as an infringement of spiritual freedom. Deaf to all murmurs, inexorable to all objections, the state educates its citizens wholesale.

I do not mean to say that the state has ever confined itself within the limits marked out in Mr. Mill's book on Liberty, or in many of the writings of Mr. Herbert Spencer. Until the beginning of the century its interference with individual life was based on obsolete theories. At present its interference with individual life is a partial acceptance of principles which have all the gloss of novelty. But interfere in what fashion it will, interfere it must. And its recent encroachments upon individual liberty have been accomplished in the face of intense and honest prejudice. On the Continent of Europe we see state control combined with democracy. But nearly all the states of the Continent owe their state control to the bureaucracy elaborated by ancient dynasties. We might therefore regard the restless activity of the state in foreign countries as a relic of that barbarism, whence they have scarcely yet emerged by a distant and blundering imitation of ourselves. But we cannot thus easily explain the course of events at home. The Hanoverian kings

wound us in no bureaucratic fetters. The Tory squires are not guilty in this matter. If we are indeed enslaved, we have been enslaved of our own free will.

The prime occasion of our encroachment upon individual freedom lay in the necessity of organizing some mode of civilized life for the artisans and labourers crowded together in great multitudes, which made all voluntary action fruitless, and under circumstances which rendered their subsistence more than usually precarious. The first measures of our new legislation were directed to assuage severe bodily suffering, and to avert grave political danger. But recent measures have gone much farther. Public opinion inclines to go farther still. All thoughtful men are more and more oppressed by the sense of waste in modern life. Why is it that, with all our wealth and all our science, we are not able to reach a life more satisfying than the life which most of us now lead? Is it not because we are bewildered by our own resources, and hampered by our own members; because we have not yet organized our new society; because nearly all the energy we can spare from business is wasted for want of intelligence to direct it? Sentiments such as these are friendly to every form of interference with the natural course of things.

But the party of progress are still embarrassed by exhausted traditions and obsolete watchwords. They are Liberals; Liberals are friends of liberty; and liberty means that everybody should do as he likes. Such freedom we may allow to be in some degree a requisite of all intelligent or moral life; but just now, and in England, it is not the thing most wanted, or the thing which rational Liberals should most strenuously endeavour to supply.

The reconstruction of society, not the liberation of individuals, is now their most pressing task. Most Liberals will not plead guilty to so heinous a fact. It answers much better to revise our practice and preserve our theory. Practical evils we do see after they have grown to be so enormous that we cannot overlook them ; but in speculative imperfections there can be no serious mischief. Accept the new practice without the new idea ; for those who constantly confess to admitting new ideas make a poor figure on the hustings. Consistency is the commonest and cheapest of the intellectual virtues ; but men of the world invariably affect it most, because it is the only one which the vulgar can appreciate. Therefore we pay no attention to the spiteful Conservatives who twit us with a vile inconsistency. We profess to be successors of Bright and Cobden, to be disciples of Ricardo and Mill ; but we conform our action to the urgent necessities of the age, nor does the great reputation of Mr. Herbert Spencer shame us out of constraining all children to go to school.

A change of policy which was necessary must have been rational. If fifty years ago it was rational to abridge, and it is now rational to enlarge the functions of the state, there must be some principle in the philosophy of politics by which both of these contrary endeavours are justified. If a philosophical maxim differ in any respect from an election battle-cry, it differs in being more comprehensive. A scientific theory, in so far as it is a true theory, can never wholly wear out. Therefore an idler unable to take part in the exhilarating game of practical politics may be excused for asking whether the merely negative conception of civil freedom is complete or fragmentary. If it be fragmentary,



can we form any theory of freedom more scientific, that is, capable of explaining with accuracy a wider range of facts?

This question has some bearing upon political practice. Practical men, indeed, follow their instinct when they imagine themselves to be following their formula. They have to act at once; to revise formulas takes time; and the children of the world may say that if you can pass your measures, it matters very little whether you give any reasons or no reasons. Nevertheless, the practical man is not wholly irrational. If he cannot reconcile the truth of his formula with the dictates of his instinct, he will not therefore cease to act, but his action will be hesitating, puzzled, and incoherent. He will not be clear and strong until he can formulate his sagacity. Even to him, therefore, the criticism of received ideas is helpful.

The present writer proposes in the first instance to state the theory of political and social freedom accepted by the most eminent English publicists, to investigate its scientific value, and to gauge its permanent usefulness. In order to do this it will be necessary to show how that theory is related to the peculiarities of the English character, the circumstances of English history, and the development of English thought. In short, we must extract a chapter from the history of philosophy. I know that the practical mind of our nation is apt to say, Surely a doctrine is true or false in itself, and should be taken upon its own merits. Englishmen do not like to hear that every doctrine is both true and false; that the merits of every doctrine are to be determined by its place in the history of ideas. We are familiar with at least

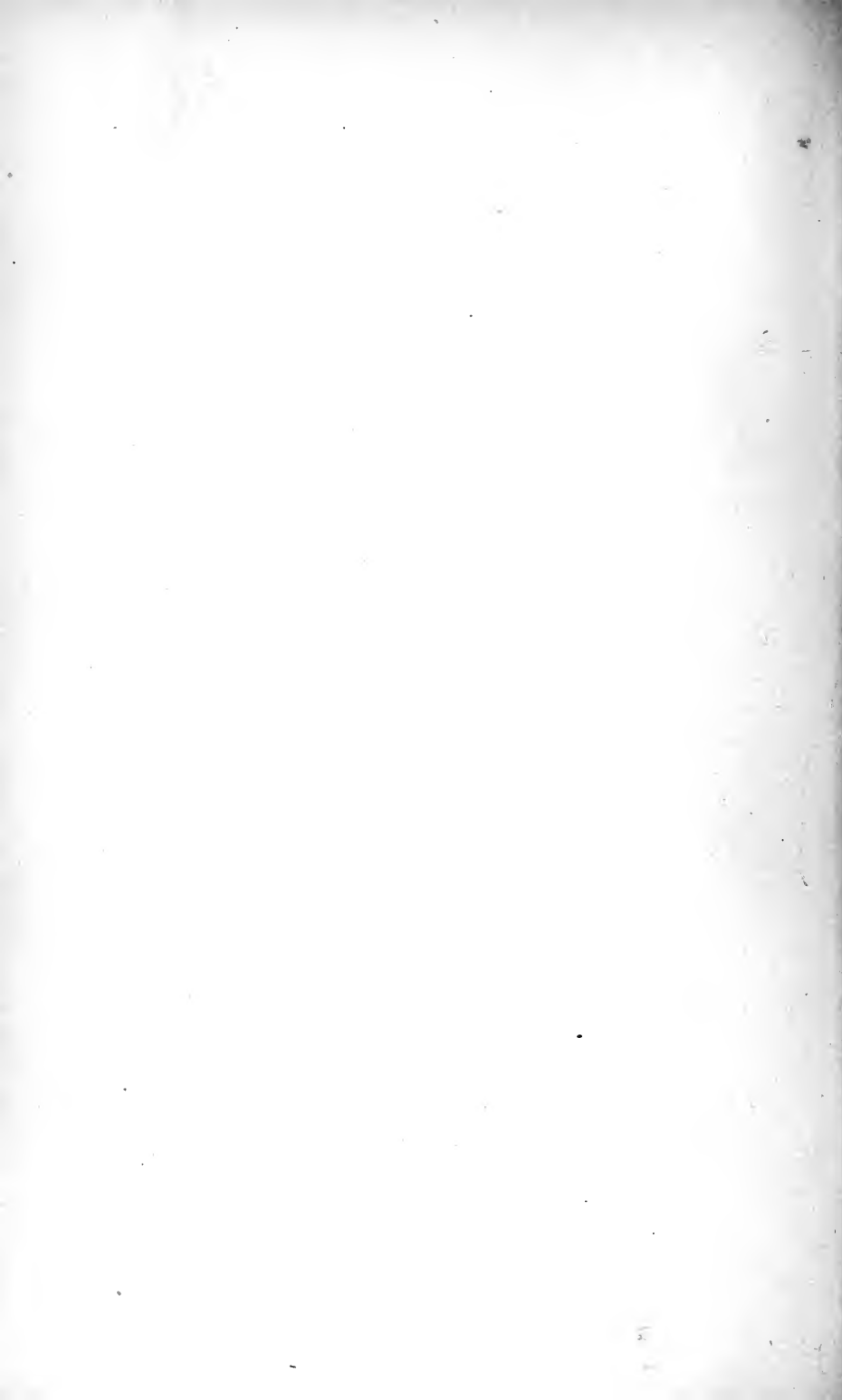
the name of evolution as applied to the course of physical life. We are prompt enough to assume that the spiritual evolution is a process exactly the same in kind as the physical evolution; but we seldom try to realize the development of an idea.

My next endeavour will be to trace the bearing upon any scientific conception of political and social freedom, of the vast stock of fresh scientific knowledge amassed in our own age. The theory of freedom is the theory of the relation subsisting between the individual and society. It is impossible to understand a relation except by knowing the things related. Thus all our knowledge of the individual or of society helps us to a clear and precise idea of freedom. In this way physiology, philology, comparative politics, theories of æsthetic, of logic, of religion, of all human activities, contribute to our theory of freedom. And it appears to me that the only scientific way of dealing with the problem of political freedom is to take nothing for granted; not to assume at first a perfect understanding as to what the individual and the society respectively are; but from the total of our knowledge relating to each, to deduce what their relation has been and must be.

When we have determined as well as we can the relation of the individual to society, we shall be able to determine the precise meaning of individuality. For the present I shall assume that individuality is a good thing, and that the development of individuality is no bad way of expressing the end sought by all social life. By comparing our conclusions as to individuality with the most popular ideas on the same subject, we shall be able to test both and bring them into the clearest light.

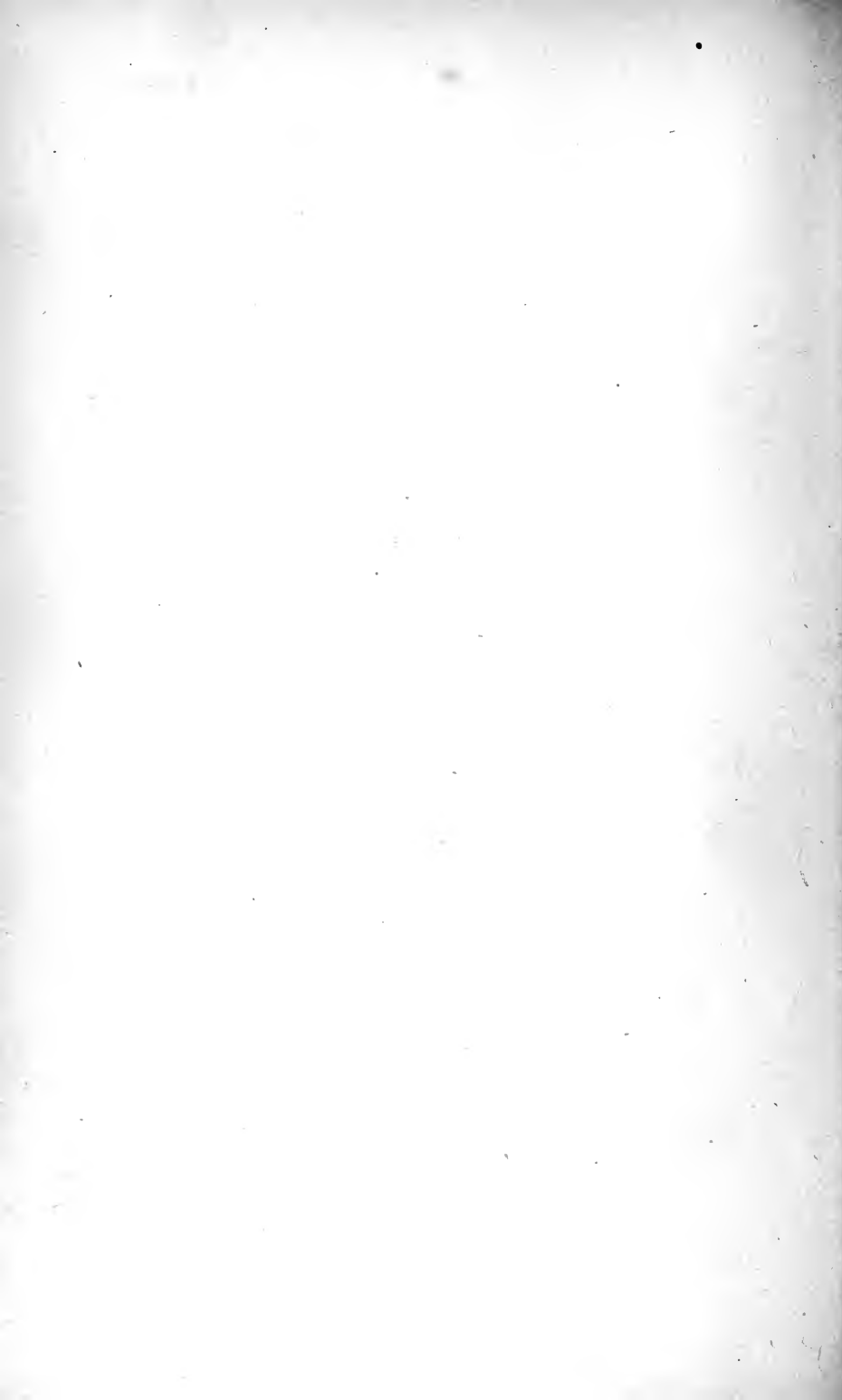
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Finally, having determined what we mean by an individual and what we mean by society, as well as the mode of developing individuality, we shall be able to define the function of society. We shall be able to express the relation of the state to society as a whole. We shall then see what are the duties of the state in the ordinary sense of the word. We shall see how far it is bound to remain passive; how far it should restrain; how far it should assist. We shall also see how far public opinion should go in supporting and completing the action of the laws. And we shall conclude this essay with an examination into the justice of those charges of bureaucracy and communism so often brought against a policy of state interference and state regulation.



II.

*HISTORY OF ENGLISH IDEAS OF  
INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY.*



## II.

### *HISTORY OF ENGLISH IDEAS OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY.*

It is always dangerous to attempt to condense a theory into a formula ; for the details which a formula must needs leave unexpressed include nearly everything that gives substance, life, and colour to the whole. It is still more dangerous to attempt to sum up in such a formula a theory with which one is not in accord ; for then the formula is apt to be not only abstract, but also unfair. Attempts to express so much in a few words can be of use only when they are made and received in the same spirit of candour.

Thus much it seemed necessary to premise before attempting to define the doctrine of civil freedom expounded by the most popular and influential of English writers upon politics. I say advisedly the doctrine ; for in spite of great variety in natural ability, in tone of feeling, in historical environment, and in scientific culture, all of these celebrated writers, from John Locke down to Herbert Spencer, have expressed on this subject ideas essentially similar. Moreover, the resemblance of their conclusions grows out of certain peculiarities of method common to them all. They all in one way or another assume the individual as a simple primary fact. From him they endeavour to deduce society. Society as distinct from the state is not very

prominent to the minds of our earlier English philosophers. The relation of the state to society is not very clearly expressed by their successors. This habit of supposing that the individual explains society, and this vague way of thinking about the state are as favourable to easy and popular modes of expression as to knottiness and confusion of ideas.

To any man who is under the necessity of trying to think accurately, nothing can be more perplexing than the various theories of human society published in England within the last two hundred and fifty years. To the general public few things seem more obvious than the maxims regarding civil liberty which have been derived from these theories. The maxims may be expressed in brief; but the theories must be examined in detail. As the purpose of this essay is practical, I shall in the first instance attempt a rough statement of the practical conclusions, and in the second instance try to trace the mode in which they were originally drawn.

Summarily stated, these conclusions would seem to be as follows. The state acts upon the citizen only by way of restraint. All restraint, *qua* restraint, is an evil. The action of the state upon the individual therefore is an evil which must be endured because it is necessary, but which, as an evil, should be reduced within the smallest possible compass. Thus confined, the state will act only to insure each citizen against the fraud or violence of his fellows, and the whole body of citizens against the fraud or violence of other communities. Overwhelming necessity may justify the state in adding others to these its only proper functions. An enlightened government entrusted with the care of an ignorant people, may constrain them to do or to forbear from



doing things whose wholesome or hurtful nature the people cannot discern. The government of a poor people may, by taxation, raise capital for the purpose of carrying out indispensable undertakings of public utility which exceed the measure of private wealth. But whenever the state does assume such extraordinary functions, its conduct is matter for the severest and most unfriendly scrutiny. In all such cases the presumption is invariably against the state. The state is always to be charged with the burthen of justifying its own activity.

Moreover, this theory regards the sphere of state action and the sphere of individual life as in every instance mutually exclusive. Whatever is taken from the one is given to the other. To the realm of individual life belongs everything intellectual, moral, spiritual, in a word, everything distinctively human. To the realm of state action appertains merely the balancing of physical forces. The individual is expansive, organic, living; the state is rigid, mechanical, lifeless. The state is only the iron frame within whose compartments each of these living organisms is at once protected and confined. As the individual grows in power and fulness of life, the state shrinks into something slight and meagre. The end of all government is to make government superfluous. At every step in our progress we are better able to dispense with the help afforded by the community. When war and crime shall have disappeared, the state will disappear also. When the social feeling shall have become all powerful, the social authority will no more be wanted.

As this theory opposes the action of the state to the action of the individual, so likewise it opposes the rights of the individual conscience to the sway of public opinion. The

power of public opinion is indeed more subtle than the power of law ; but for that very reason it is more penetrating, more persistent, more intense, and ought to excite a more sensitive, restless, determined jealousy. Like the state, public opinion operates by way of restraint. The state restrains in the interest and on the principles of those who possess political power ; public opinion restrains in the interest and on the principles of the majority. Since the majority are essentially commonplace, the opinion of the majority can only consecrate their common nature. Thus public opinion is a check quite as much upon excellence as upon inferiority. It can be of use only as an instrument of police. It should interfere only to prevent one man from directly injuring another. Logically, therefore, public opinion will become less and less powerful as men become more and more civilized ; public opinion will dwindle as social sympathy grows, and will finally disappear when every man shall be deeply interested in what his neighbours do, and sincerely anxious to do what will please them.

I know full well how inadequate a statement of the current theory of freedom I have been able to give, and I know that no two thinking men hold any theory in precisely the same form. But some such theory as this for a long time past has found favour with philosophers and statesmen alike. It is far from discarded even now. To many it may appear self-evident. Yet self-evident it certainly is not. A citizen of one of the famous states of antiquity would not have denied such a theory, for he would not have been able to understand it. Neither Pericles nor Fabius, neither Plato nor Cicero would have realized the antithesis between the state and the citizen. To them the life of the citizen and the life of the

state were one. In their eyes a state was a corporation, citizenship a privilege, personal freedom the right to discharge public duty. The body politic secured to its members everything which made life worth living; and in return its members held their lives only for the service of the body politic. Neither could these great men have done justice to the antithesis between the body politic and the government. To the practical man of antiquity such an antithesis would have sounded very much like nonsense; to the philosopher of antiquity it would have expressed the last stage of social corruption and disintegration. In short, the antique republican would have subscribed to the declaration of the French king, "L'état c'est moi."

And as both the men of practice and the men of theory agreed in thinking that the strength of the state was the strength of society, and the strength of society the strength of the individual, so they agreed in regarding a vigorous public opinion as the basis of a vigorous society. Plato laments indeed the mischief done by a vicious public opinion; he writhes under the tyranny of the majority; but he does not assume that the majority must always give the tone to thought; he does not exclude from his ideal society the influence of public opinion; rather, he acknowledges that influence, and endeavours to give it a lasting bias in favour of his ideal institutions.

Of course it may with some truth be said that the ancients ignored an idea which permeates the whole of our social philosophy: the idea of progress. It may be said that the legislators and philosophers of antiquity erred, as the founders of the great religious orders erred, in trying to substitute uniformity for variety, tradition

for invention, stability for movement. Nor do I deny that in these respects we have outgrown the wisdom of Greece and the sagacity of Rome. But we may find matter for thought in the reflection that the freest and most enlightened nations of antiquity, the nations rich beyond all others in the vigour and originality of the individual, understood by freedom something quite different from that which the term conveys to English ears.

The men of the Middle Age would have had at once more and less difficulty in understanding our modern theory of freedom ; less difficulty because they were almost wholly unfamiliar with the conception of a state ; more difficulty because they were bound in organizations peculiar to their time, and even more elaborate than the ancient civic organization. The countryfolk found in their territorial status the burghers found in their system of guilds, and all men alike found in the universal church an organization which could scarcely be said to restrain individual life, since it determined in every detail what the individual life should be. True, there was revolt in mediæval, as there was faction in classical antiquity ; and the spirit of revolt in the Middle Age, like the spirit of faction in Hellas, was a strong and conquering spirit. Yet neither in the literature nor in the history of the Middle Age do we find any clear feeling of opposition between the state, or the substitute for a state, on the one hand, and the individual on the other. Men yet lived in public opinion, in the creed, and in the institutions of their age ; these were yet the atmosphere whose pressure bearing upon every point was felt at none.

Coming down to generations nearer our own, we find that our notion of freedom is not the notion of freedom most widely

diffused on the Continent. The middle-class republican, the working-class socialist, demand, not that the state and public opinion should do as little as possible, but rather that they should do what republican or socialist thinks right. The ideal dreamer and the practical statesman of modern France or Germany have not departed very far from their antique prototypes. If any striking exception to this rule can be found, it will be found among those enthusiasts who include in their anathema not only all existing governments, but all existing institutions whatsoever. Such enthusiasts have indeed developed with austere logic and accepted with most praiseworthy frankness all the consequences of a negative doctrine of freedom; but they have transformed freedom into something which temporizing thinkers would scarcely care to recognize.

The theory of freedom most in favour among our countrymen bears a very close affinity to one side of their character. Not only is the Englishman fond of liberty, but he often seems to value liberty most when she is most unsocial. Local self-government, domestic privacy, and personal reserve are natural and pleasant to us. We and our kinsmen have founded all the great federal states known to modern history. The Swiss, the Dutch, and the North American Republics are all Teutonic. We have always claimed for every town and for every district the right to manage its own affairs. We have asserted the inviolability of the homes even of the humblest. We have carried our individual self-assertion to a degree which cramps and chills the free and genial intercourse so much prized by southern nations.

Yet the love of having one's own way may not so overmaster all other feelings in the English breast as we sometimes sup-

pose. Throughout the course of our history a strong sense of public duty has done much to temper a strong self-will. Our power of combining for public purposes involves power of submitting to discipline; and the spirit of discipline is entirely opposed to the feeling that all restraint as such is an evil. In fact, we have been able to subsist with so little formal, because we have had so much informal government. The sway of public opinion is strong among us, in the judgment of many far too strong; so also is the authority of the various sects and parties over their own adherents; and so is the cohesion of our numberless municipal and private corporations. These various powers have done a great deal which in other communities is done by the sovereign. But they represent an element in our living society which our social theory does not fully express. It is not, therefore, to the overruling bent of our national character that this theory owes its general acceptance. Indeed, speculative thought, if more than speculative in name, is an honest endeavour to overpass the boundaries of local circumstance and tribal prejudice; to attain to a statement of what is essentially human, rational, and universal.

Neither would it be just to say that this theory had its root in the political conditions of a bygone period. Although it exerted most force at a time when England was passing from the feudal to the industrial type of civilization, when the old organization of life had become so decrepit that impatient reformers often took all organization to be something baneful; yet the theory which denounced all restraint as in its proper nature pure evil, was something more than the scientific expression of popular discontent. It was not merely because the England of eighty years ago groaned

under the yoke of antiquated custom and irrational law, of institutions which corrupted those whom they favoured, or favoured only the corrupt, that the speculative reformers of that day, economists, jurists, and poets, all joined to celebrate the advent of universal liberty. States of society such as then existed, states of society far more oppressive, have in other ages aroused no spirit of innovation, or have aroused a spirit of Puritanic discipline which abrogates the old law only to put a sterner law in its place. Nothing in the condition of England at that period will explain why her most ethereal poet hoped to reform domestic life by abolishing marriage, or why her shrewdest publicists hoped to reform social life by working out the rule of enlightened selfishness and universal competition.

Our modern ideas of liberty have sources far more remote than we commonly suppose. Our principal source of such ideas has been the distinction between things spiritual and things temporal. This distinction we owe to the religious history of the modern world.

The primitive Christian church, viewed from without, was a feeble association of a few poor men surrounded on every side by a hostile world. The Roman state was coextensive with that world. Thus church and state were antagonists from the beginning. Within the church was spiritual freedom; without the church was corporeal tyranny. The primitive Christian in relation to his brother Christians was the happy partaker in a common life; in relation to his pagan fellow-citizens he was a solitary yet persecuted individual trying, amid general blindness and hardness of heart, to save his own soul alive. The opposition of church and state involved an opposition

between the ruler and the subject; between public institutions and private life; between the traditions of the past and the feelings of the present; in short, between the world and the soul, between the inner and the outer life. Thus Christianity may be said to have shattered the social unity; to have divided men's allegiance; to have brought freedom, and with freedom discord.

With the lapse of years the relations of the church to the Empire underwent a change. The church became more powerful than the Empire and not less pagan. The spiritual authority asserted itself with all the vehemence of the world, the temporal authority submitted itself with all the fervour of a neophyte. Sometimes stubborn, oftener complying, almost always yielding obedience in the last resort, the successors of Cæsar governed according to the word of the successors of Peter. Yet the state always remained something external to the church. Hostile it had been, it was now inferior.

When the nations of modern Europe came to feel how strong they were, and to hunger after independence, political and social, the state as distinct from the church recovered something of its former consequence. But it was only after a struggle of unparalleled severity that the civil organization of each several people could assert itself against the theocratic organization of Christendom. The conflict between Popes and sovereigns was prolonged until hostility between the spiritual and the temporal powers had become a tradition, a principle, a law. When the mutual ire of ecclesiastical and secular powers had subsided into a dull jealousy, men's ideas about life and society had been modified far more than they understood. The distinction between things



spiritual and things temporal was indeed a pretext for dropping the quarrel in which neither side could prevail and of which both sides were weary. But the distinction has hardened into a profound prejudice which leavens all private and all political life. It is this prejudice which assists people to make money and pursue pleasure for six days in the week, and on the seventh day to devote to the worship of God all the soul which has not been exhausted in the one task or dissipated in the other. It is this prejudice which makes religious life sterile and political life immoral, which sees in a church only the repository of legends which nobody can believe, and in a state, only the repository of power which nobody can revere.

Another principal source of our peculiar conception of freedom is to be found in the Protestant doctrine of private judgment. The Reformer did not, indeed, pretend to absolute spiritual freedom. He would not himself question, nor would he allow any one else to question the authority of the Word of God. But if its authority was undisputed, its interpretation was free. The Bible contained the classical literature of a people most remote from him in time and place, the most dissimilar from him in the whole form and fashion of their lives, endowed with a genius the most unique and the most profound. In consulting it he was prone to reject the aids not only of uncritical tradition, but also of critical learning. Nor did his presumption want a plausible excuse. If every human soul is beyond price, if every man must work out his own salvation, if only those who believe in the Word of God can be saved, then each man must judge for himself what is the true interpretation thereof, and the Word of God must be intelligible to the natural reason of

all men. To this conclusion the Reformer was logically driven. This conclusion the most devout among the Reformed communions have agreed in accepting. Humanly speaking, it is the most absurd conclusion ever reached in religious controversy. In the first place, it threw back the most energetic minds in Europe to find their spiritual sustenance in the literature of a people who had only the barest rudiments of political life. In the second place, it condemned them to study this literature in the most unintelligent way, which ensured results the most incongruous with everything actual or possible in their own living world. And finally, it referred men in every occurrence of practical life to a private judgment which had really been moulded by an infinite series of historic events, but which seemed to them the direct, immediate, unimpeachable and irresistible voice of God.

Thus the Reformation, whilst emancipating each man's spirit, left him ignorant how much his spirit owed to society. In asserting against an arbitrary and impure power the independence of the nation and the individual, it rendered to genuine liberty an inestimable service. But in failing to recognize the real continuity of religion and of general culture, it prepared the way for eccentricity, division, and weakness. Nay, it prepared the way for a tyranny less powerful but more vexatious than the tyranny of Rome. It is hard enough to be cramped within the limits of an œcumenical church, within the barriers erected by many councils, and by the long succession of Fathers, within a polity inherited from the Cæsars, within a tradition to which Plato and Aristotle as well as Isaiah and St. Paul have contributed. But it is still worse to gasp within the

stifling prison of a few fanatics whose ideas have never transcended their own district or their own generation, fanatics to whom their own ignorance and roughness serve for an added assurance of Divine favour and protection. Such masters in terms confess but in acts renounce all freedom of private judgment for anybody but themselves. And so inseparable is the union of thought with action, and so potent the practical impulse of Protestantism, that the very pietists who are most hostile to every form of outward control are also most careful to conform all their political actions to their religious ideas. Thus they are always apt to make legislation the instrument of intolerance. Like the Puritans of the seventeenth, the Puritans of the nineteenth century are eager to press the whole nation into their mould. After destroying the union of church and state, they would remodel the state on the lines of their church. Nor should any one impute this as a fault. The Puritan is blameworthy, not for loving and honouring his ideal, not for trying to realize his ideal, but for that uncritical, unhistorical, unsympathetic temper which snatches at an ideal without duly considering whether it be sufficiently large and human for the needs of so large a thing as humanity.

That which had been a feeling in the Lutheran Reformation became a system in the Baconian philosophy.

It is well known that the individual is the hinge of all our English speculation. In the works of our English philosophers everything is admirably lucid and easy so long as we take the individual for granted. Under their analysis the intellectual life is reduced to a series of sensations, the moral life to a series of impulses, and society to a collection of individuals. What a sensation would be, or how it

could be described out of relation to other sensations, and to the double world of knowledge and reality into which all sensations enter; what an impulse would amount to, or what could be said about it, once disconnected from the other impulses which with it are woven into our moral life, and with it result in our moral character; or what would be the nature of an individual prior to and apart from society; all these are questions which our philosophy has never fully answered, perhaps because our philosophers have never fully felt their importance.

Nevertheless, these atoms could not be framed into their several worlds without the help of some connecting principle. In logic the laws of association, and in ethics the instinct which drives every man to pursue his greatest pleasure have supplied to sensations and to impulses their respective bonds of union. With these we have no concern here. But the political bond of union as conceived by our most celebrated thinkers, demands a fuller consideration. For their ideas upon this subject afford a key to the popular ideas about freedom.

Throughout the whole development of political theory in England there runs a very marked consistency. In whatever mode the social tie may be conceived of, it is always regarded as merely a tie. The individuals whom it binds together are the really interesting objects. Society is determined by the individuals of whom it is composed and whose purposes it subserves. Such is the doctrine expressed by Hobbes and Locke; such also is the doctrine of Mr. Herbert Spencer. But this first axiom of our political philosophy has been elaborated into various systems, which have issued from three schools most remarkable for their

scientific interest and for the influence which they have exercised.

The student of political philosophy will easily distinguish these three schools. There is the school of Hobbes and Locke, who deduce the social system from an original contract; there is the school of Bentham, who deduce it from the principle of utility; and there is the school of Mr. Herbert Spencer, who deduce it from a law similar to that which rules the development of animal and of vegetable life. The first of these schools associated itself with the Revolution of the seventeenth century; the second with the humane and democratic movement of recent generations; and the third with that extraordinary improvement and diffusion of physical science which distinguishes our own time. Let us take them one by one.

The theory of the social contract has long since been proved by history to be false, and by philosophy to be absurd; and at the present day can find no professed adherents. But it had its origin in a way of considering these subjects which is just as prevalent in our own day as in the days of Locke, and it has contributed very much to mould not only our constitutional theories, but our current doctrine of freedom. We are not now concerned to distinguish the various circumstances with which the fancy of philosophers has adorned the ratification of this airy compact; or the ingenious political inferences which their logic deduced from its imagined terms. In these respects the social contract of Locke differs much from the social contract of Hobbes. But here we need only state so much of the theory as was common to all its teachers.

Originally, therefore, men lived either alone or in constant enmity with one another. Their lives were short, uncertain, and unpleasant. When they became sensible of the inconveniences attaching to their unsocial habits, they gathered together and agreed to form themselves into political societies, and with that object to surrender those natural rights whose exercise was incompatible with social life. What rights were thus surrendered, to whom the surrender was made, and whether or no the surrender was irrevocable, were points decided by the philosophers according as their personal sentiments were of a Whig or of a Tory complexion. Hobbes argued with great plausibility that the sovereign created by the social compact must be an absolute sovereign. Locke held no less firmly that rational men agreeing to create a government would necessarily invest it with such attributes as attached to the constitutional monarchy of England.

But whether or no the primitive savage had bargained for the privileges of a subject of the Grand Monarch or for the liberties of a subject of Dutch William; on one thing all reflecting men were well agreed, that he had resolved to constitute society. Society had been constituted for the only purpose which primitive man could conceive: for the purpose of self-preservation. In order to obtain the benefits of political association, individuals had consented to sacrifice some of their natural and indefeasible rights. But inasmuch as society was merely a contrivance of police, it followed that the less each citizen was obliged to sacrifice to society, the better it was for him. Association was merely a less evil than isolation. Not only did society exist for the sake of each social unit; but it served to supply merely the first,

the rudest, the meanest necessities of his nature. Social life upon this showing was a kind of after-thought; and the social affection was filed down to an enlightened selfishness. Self-seeking and competition had made up the natural condition of men; and within the bounds imposed by the social contract men remained self-seeking and competitive still.

Such a conception of society had nothing to shock an age weary of civil discord and sick of religious controversy, abounding in the good things of this world, yet poor in spiritual riches. But it could not have been accepted by any one equipped with even moderate historical knowledge or in the least degree tinctured with the historical spirit. In this respect, however, it is scarcely more hopeless than many later theories of society. English philosophers, whilst repeating by rote the old Baconian saws about the fruitfulness of experience and the sovereign virtue of facts, have seldom troubled themselves about the facts recorded in history, or about that experience which is embodied in the law, the literature, the art and the religion of men. Each of their successive explanations of society has served to explain little or nothing, because they never troubled themselves to make a critical and exhaustive study of social life. And in this respect Bentham is little in advance of Locke.

Bentham was rather a jurist and a philanthropist than a philosopher. Whilst he discarded the doctrine of the social contract, he retained the theory of human nature propounded by Locke and his school. Bentham held that society had its origin, not in a contract, but in a feeling of utility. Utility he understood to mean the enjoyment of pleasure and the avoiding of pain. Society exists for pur-

poses of general utility, of the greatest happiness for the greatest number; the greatest total of pleasure and the smallest total of pain. Bentham, too, is a logical epicurean; he does not regard any one sort of pleasure as essentially different from any other sort of pleasure. Pleasures, according to him, are discriminated only by difference of degree. In society man secures the gratification of the social instinct; and since the social instinct is part of our nature, society on Bentham's theory is something more to the individual than a mere makeshift. Nevertheless, the individual plays just as great a part in the political theory of Bentham as in the political theory of Hobbes or of Locke. Neither the one theory nor the other takes account of anything but the natural man. Happiness to Bentham is the same as happiness to his predecessors. It is something, too, whereof every one may claim an equal share and nobody more. It is something which can be measured out and distributed. It is the object of all institutions.

Thus Bentham recognizes no organic incorporation of the individual with the society. He looks upon society as an aggregate of individuals. Each of these individuals may and must have his own idea of the most agreeable life for himself. Society is to act solely for the purpose of securing to every man as much fulfilment of his own ideal as is compatible with other men's fulfilment of their ideals. A spiritual nature in man, a moral purpose in the state are scarcely dreamt of in Bentham's philosophy. A state such as he conceives can have very little call to interfere with any of its members; a citizen such as he conceives will be capable of very little devotion for any state.

In Bentham the practical reformer was too strong for the



political theorist. He and his school were polemics firstly, and secondly philosophers. The Benthamite system has ceased to exist as a system. It has become at once obscure and powerful. But the social theory now most in vogue with professed students of society is the theory expounded by M. Comte in France and by Mr. Herbert Spencer in England, the theory commonly known by the barbarous and unmeaning epithet, sociological. The sociologist applies to the interpretation of political and social facts the supposed methods of physical science. He explains the aggregate by deducing it from the individual. He bases the science of society upon the sciences of biology and psychology. He looks upon society as a natural organism; upon history as a natural evolution. How does this theory modify our ideas as to the relation subsisting between society and the individual? How does it affect our ideas of liberty?

The sociologist interprets history by applying the doctrine of evolution. By the term evolution he understands that sort of evolution which goes on in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and which the late Mr. Darwin did so much to define and illustrate. Reduced to its most general terms, this evolution is the net result of natural forces working together through an indefinite lapse of time. I need not say that under the appellation of natural forces I include not only chemical, mechanical, and suchlike forces, but also the instincts of animal nature, such as hunger, thirst, and the desire of reproducing one's kind. Not only these, but also the finer instincts, love of power, love of beauty, love of renown, and the very talents and virtues themselves may be merely natural powers, if they operate without reflection and without an object, merely as appetites de-

manding appeasement or faculties demanding exercise. In short, all unconscious force is natural force. In the animal world some, and in the human world all of these forces in their joint action have produced that which we call the struggle for existence, the interminable labour of every living thing to maintain itself against the stress of nature and the hostility of its fellow-creatures. From this struggle for existence has come all the progress of which the physical world admits, the progress which consists in the destruction of the unfit, and the survival of the fit, the progress which we know as evolution.

Applying these ideas to the treatment of his own subject, the sociologist conceives of society as an organism whose component parts are individuals. From the primary qualities of these individuals he deduces the primary qualities of society. The primary qualities of individuals are either physical and determined by biology, or mental and determined by psychology. In either case they equally belong to the sphere of natural science, and as they combine to make up an individual who is merely natural, so the individuals combine to make up a purely natural social organism. As between the several social organisms, and between the members of each social organism, there goes on an unceasing struggle for existence. The struggle for existence, here as elsewhere, is the sole means of progress. But it operates upon the society and upon the individual in different ways. For in the process of evolution the society is ever developing new organs, and attains to a richer life ; but the individual is ever developing a more specific character, and is narrowed down to a poorer life.

A merely natural organism has no idea of the type

towards which it tends. A vegetable or an animal develops the qualities which enable it to live: if it cannot develop them, it dies. So it will be with the state. Again, the same law applies to every member of a society. Like the organ of a vegetable or animal, he must make himself useful or die of atrophy. He develops, therefore, without knowing anything about it. He develops and his state develops in virtue simply of an irresistible instinct to live. All life is a battle, and all living things are results of conflict. That is to say, sociology finds in competition the principle of progress for the individual and for the society. No other principle of progress is compatible with its postulates. The individual sociologist may be too tender to expatiate upon this hard law; he may be too refined to admire its results, but he cannot help owning its validity. And if competition be the life of progress, the problem of the statesman is so to deal with society as to make competition most general and most intense. In no way can he attain this end so well as by leaving the members of society to settle accounts with one another. Order, indeed, is needful to methodized conflict. Even a duel or a prize-fight is impossible without the enforcement of rules which hamper the discretion of the combatants; much more, therefore, must the war of all against all be regulated, to the end that it may be lasting and universal. But with such regulations as are adequate to this end the legislator should be content.

Mr. Herbert Spencer protests in very forcible terms against the habit of burthening the strong in order to relieve the weak. He tempers this censure with no very hearty praise of the virtue known as altruism. But in so doing he compromises the cause of progress. For in social, as in the

animal life, all development comes of the struggle for existence. In this struggle, it is true, animals are the more fortunate, inasmuch as they prey upon other sorts of animals, whilst we prey on our own flesh and blood. That kindly feeling which we share with seals and rats will sometimes force us against our wiser will to relieve the agony of a weak or disabled combatant. But a propensity to benevolence, like a propensity to wine, although pleasant and within bounds almost innocent, is yet a propensity whose freedom would be our ruin. We should cultivate altruism as we should cultivate a taste for rare china; because sympathy, no less than a love of the beautiful, is a source of pleasure. But in either case we divert power and wealth from useful purposes to purposes of lighter enjoyment. If we really wish to hasten the progress of our kind, we should develop our own power of maintaining life, for even if we do not gain our private ends we shall benefit mankind by giving others more trouble in crushing us, and so constraining them to a severer discipline and a more thorough specialization.

Comte, indeed, shrank from following out into its practical conclusions the physical theory of society. He tried to base Ultramontane institutions upon sociological principles. He endeavoured to unite the feelings of St. Francis with the thought of Mr. Herbert Spencer. But, although his attempt was full of interest, as showing how strong and attractive social and religious habits of mind will always continue to be, it was inevitably a failure. All spiritual influences tend to subdue and regulate the fierce instincts of self-preservation and self-assertion. Why should we wish to subdue the only forces which make for progress? Why should we trouble ourselves to regulate powers that find their

own goal as surely as water finds its own level? If the only possible progress is by natural evolution, the only possible policy is complete *laissez-faire*. Mr. Herbert Spencer in this instance deserves the praise of a rigorous consistency. His maxims are the normal product of his philosophy. If his speculative premisses are sound, his practical conclusions are certainly true.

The practical conclusions of the sociologist cannot differ much from those of the utilitarian or of the believer in a primary social compact. For the school of Locke, the school of Bentham, and the school of Spencer, all agree in holding that the individual determines the society. The last-named school have indeed engaged themselves in a train of thought which must end by showing that the individual receives from society at least as much as society receives from the individual. But at present they have not yet shaken themselves free from the obsolete method of their predecessors. They still postulate the individual as though he were in social science the primary unit. Locke or Bentham would have interpreted the individual by the aid of psychology alone. Herbert Spencer has recourse to biology as well. But for our own present purpose this circumstance matters little. Biology must regard man as a physical agent solely. English psychology from first to last has never regarded him in any other light. It takes account only of the natural and unconscious.

In our English psychology the good, the true, the beautiful are simply what each man takes them to be. He does pursue, he must pursue what seems pleasant to him; for that which seems pleasant to him is to him really pleasant; and he has no aim except to please himself.

Therefore he lives, if not very well, at least as well as he possibly can. By no standard essentially higher than his own can he be judged. No other man, no other aggregate of men can say to him that he ought to do otherwise than he is doing. They no doubt have equally strong appetites and an equally good right to follow them. Therefore it is prudent, it is even moral, if we can use the word in such a context, to give every one a fair start in the race for pleasure, and to restrain each so far as is necessary for doing thus much. But further than this to interfere is superfluous, is harmful. These children of nature, so keen and so hungry, will themselves invent the best machinery for fulfilling their natural appetites, and society need do no more than gently withhold any one child of nature from devouring all the rest.

Upon this point our greatest and most consistent thinkers have expressed themselves with the utmost clearness. Locke could resolve the ethical problem only by assuming that the Bible is inspired. Did we not know by the help of revelation that an almighty being will reward certain acts with infinite pleasure, and punish certain acts with infinite pain, we could say of any man who pursued a course commonly esteemed base, inhuman, or vicious, this, and this only, that we deem his taste peculiar. Locke very candidly compares the preference for a particular course of action to the preference for a particular diet. Hume, indeed, observes that we approve such qualities as tend to further our own happiness, or by furthering the happiness of others, afford us agreeable matter of reflection. But with candour surpassing Locke's, Hume illustrates his theory by the pleasure we feel no less in the amorous adventures than in

the martial and politic achievements of the great Henry the Fourth. Morality as understood by Locke had no place in Locke's philosophy; morality as explained by Hume is not anything which we can call moral. This failing in their system their successors have tried to remedy, some by dwelling upon the pleasures of a gratified social instinct, some by tracing out the nervous development which brings us at last to take pleasure only in such pleasant things as our society deems respectable. But in every case, if only we go deep enough, we come back to the simply sentient being, whose moral ideal is a gratified sensibility.

From this point of view the Epicureanism which aims at the greatest happiness of the greatest number does not differ much from the Epicureanism of Locke or Hume. The philanthropic Epicurean assumes that man will get most pleasure by gratifying the social instinct. This happy phrase must not lead us to identify the pleasant pastime of conversing with our friends and the dry task of trying to improve our kind. If that task be of all others the most agreeable to the natural man, we certainly need no state interference, for we have attained to the communion of saints. If it be the most agreeable only to the man who has been educated to find it such, then there may be room for state interference. But since pleasure is the supreme good to which every man has an indefeasible right, it seems dangerous to educate a man in a way which may blunt all his keenest susceptibilities and give him in return a very dull relish for benevolence and heroism. Society has no right to sacrifice one man to any number of other men. It can never be certain that it is not doing him a wrong when it trains him to refuse everything that once pleased him

most and to choose everything which formerly he most abhorred. The final law is to gratify one's own instinct, and nobody can tell in the case of any other man which instinct is most pressing.

It is also immaterial whether or no every man be a new creation, or the result of an endless evolution. It does not matter that every man's sensibility is inherited, or that men of different ancestry come to take pleasure in very different things. In every case pleasure is equally to be wished for, and each person is equally able to decide what most pleases him. In every case it is the business of society to ensure that each shall be pleased as much as is consistent with every one else's equal right to pleasure. That society is the creature, not of contract, but of evolution, affects but little the end which we conceive that it ought to pursue, or the limits which we would impose upon its interference. It is the result of our weakness and the instrument of our appetites. The social bond is a grievous yoke only less galling than the impotence of isolation. Without the help of our fetters we could not stand, but we do not therefore feel our fetters less. Like the life of labour, the social life springs from the primæval curse. The only rational motive of loyalty to any state is the belief that worse would come of rebellion than can come of submission. Patriotism as a mode of prudence is conceivable, is praiseworthy ; but patriotism as a romance, a passion, or a duty, disappears altogether.

This, no doubt, is a thoroughly secular view of society. But the man who thinks for himself may free himself from all other bonds ; the bond of logic he cannot break. As is the unity of a philosophy, so is its power. It was by no mere accident that our greatest thinkers have combined with a



sceptical theory of logic, an Epicurean theory of morals. It was by no mere accident that in politics they magnified the individual life and curtailed the action of the state. For the doctrine of negative freedom, the doctrine that it is of sovereign virtue for every man, so far as is possible, to do what he likes, the doctrine that we form character by following inclination, rests on a deep-seated doubt as to whether truth and certainty exist at all, and on a deep-seated conviction that the surest good is pleasure, which everybody is likely to pursue of his own accord. Carlyle was consistent when in his denunciation of modern society he embraced at once its doubts as to truth, its belief in pleasure, and its political *laissez-faire*.

For its extraordinary popularity and power the social philosophy which we have just sketched is indebted to modern political economy. In the eighteenth century for the first time scientific men seriously interested themselves in the laws which govern the production and distribution of wealth. In the eighteenth century also these processes of production and distribution were transformed by a series of wonderful inventions. At once antiquated by a new industrial life, and tested by a severe analysis, the regulations theretofore imposed upon commerce were found to be absurd and mischievous. Hence a general and enthusiastic belief that if only the money-making energies of every individual had free play, every individual would be rich. The state had only to let the citizen alone. It would be idle for the state to attempt anything better. Not that the great economists indulged in these extravagancies; but many of their disciples wrote as if men were not merely disposed of their own free will, but constrained at once by natural necessity and moral

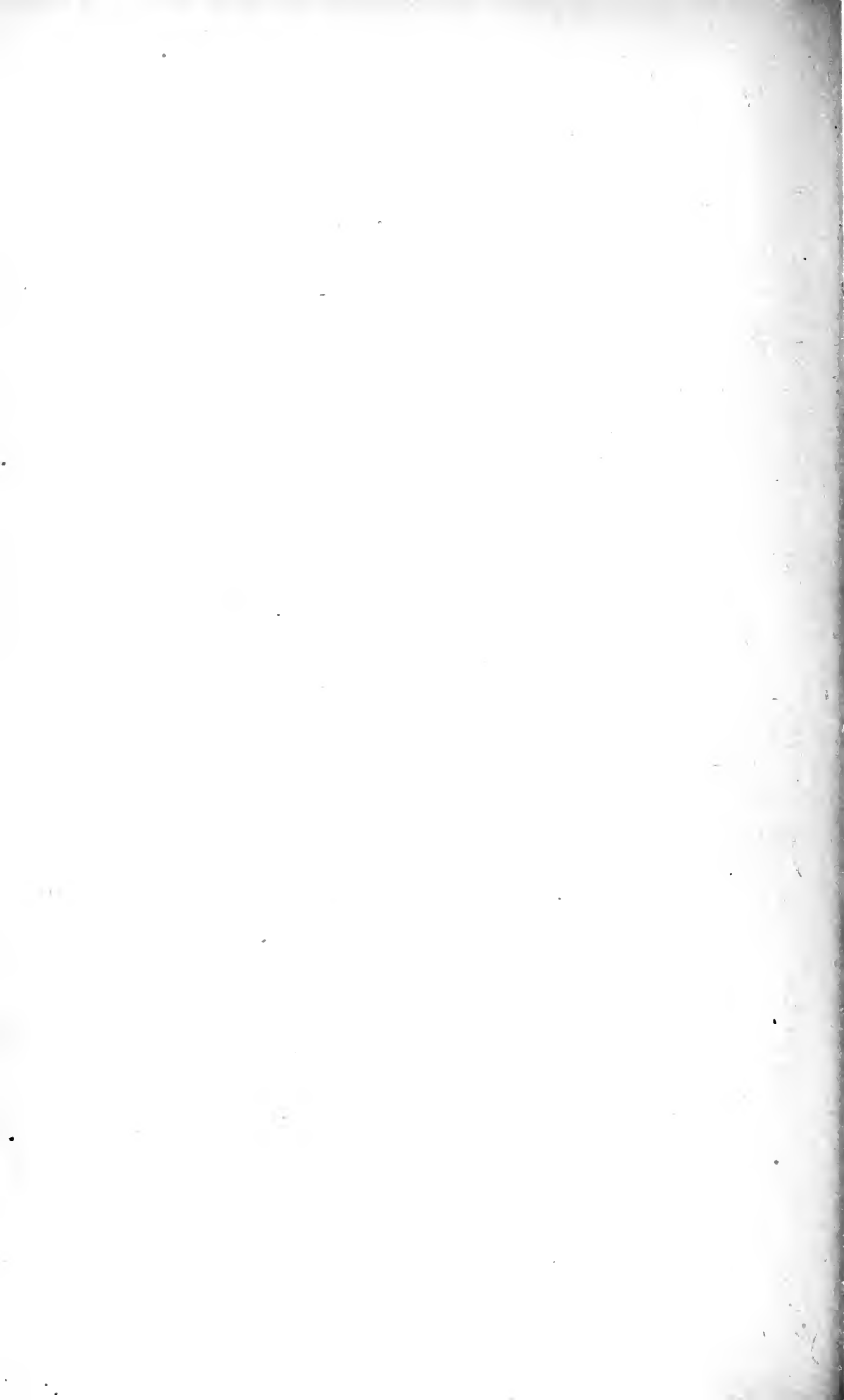
law to grow rich as fast as possible. They seem to have thought that the forces which produce and distribute wealth could as little as the forces which raise the mist and pour down the rain be controlled by law or opinion, or honour or conscience.

Many Liberals of that time wished to apply the fashionable economic principles to the whole of life. The maxim of leaving every man to do for himself the best he can, coincided so happily with their particular aspirations that they magnified it into a universal and immutable law of progress, embracing education, art, literature, and science. A magic potency was ascribed to supply and demand. Men forgot that the supply of any good thing is proportioned, not to our real, but to our conscious need of it. The more ignorant any man, the less his demand for knowledge. The less refined any man is, the greater his satisfaction in a gross life. The less he is in truth, beauty, and goodness, the less he will feel his poverty. Thus the law of supply and demand, whatever its truth in regard to the sustenance of animal, is altogether untrue in regard to the sustenance of spiritual life. In everything intellectual, moral, and religious the true rule is rather that the demand varies directly as the supply.

Mere individual energy may make a nation rich, but can never make a nation civilized. Men must unite if they would compass any great object. Men will unite to compass any object dear to them. If men are more willing to combine for the purpose of making money than for purposes religious or moral, artistic or scientific, it is not because any of these purposes is too ethereal to be followed save in solitude, but because they are purposes for which men do not really care. Only those who set no serious value on the higher life would

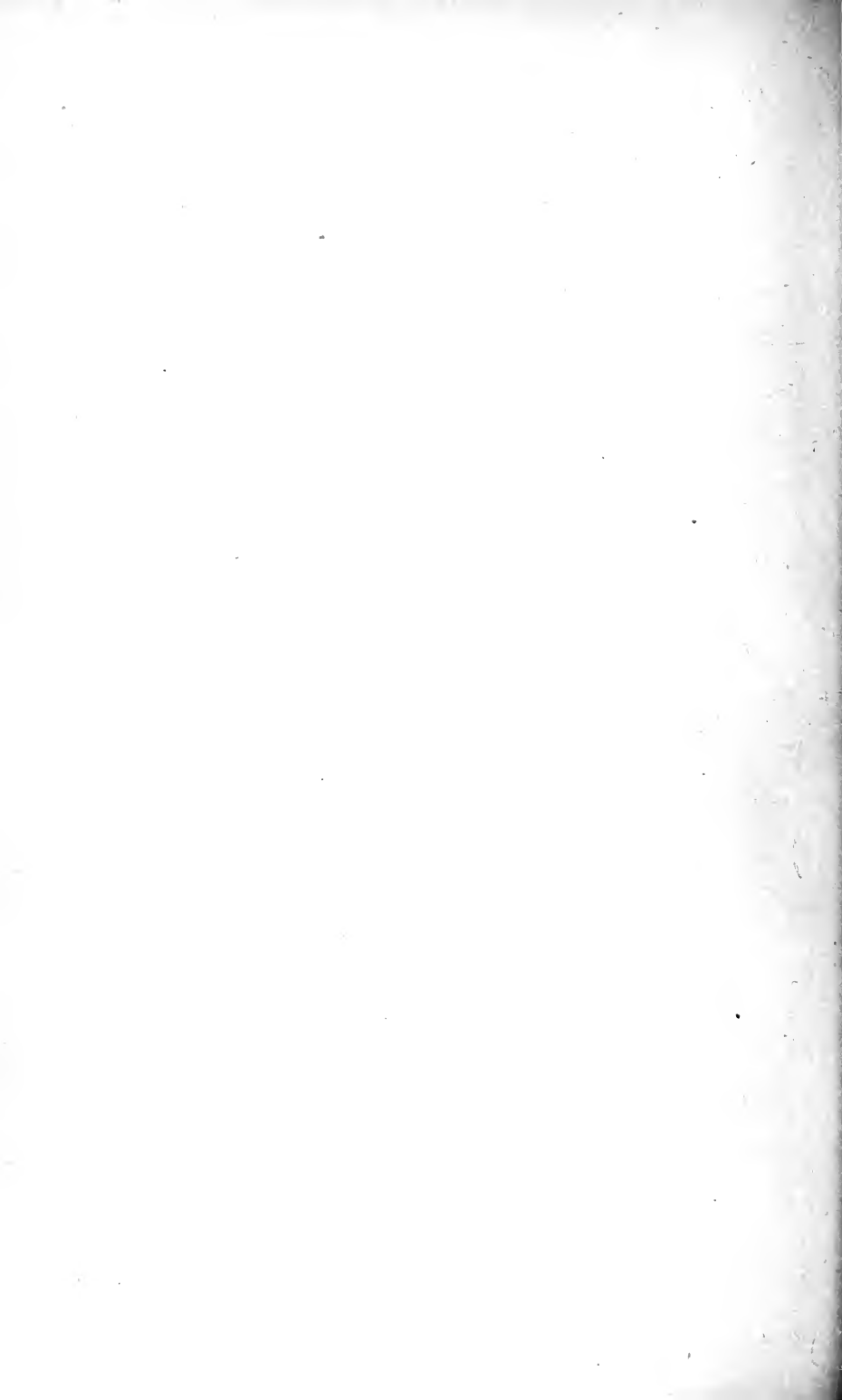
reject for themselves or deny to others the sympathy, advice, or aid afforded by any kind of association. The much-admired individual, self-centred and self-contained, is not so very far from the strong and solitary wild beast. Both are well equipped to seize things whose use or pleasure ends with themselves; but for securing anything more they are weak as a blind kitten or an Indian of Paraguay.

Let us now briefly sum up this very imperfect retrospect. To the Middle Age we are indebted for the distinction between things temporal and things spiritual, and for the conception of the state which limits its action to the domain of the temporal. To the Reformation we are indebted for the doctrine of private judgment, which in its abuse has hindered men from recognizing the spiritual continuity of the race, the spiritual unity of society, and the limits of wise or profitable originality. To the English school of philosophy we owe an explanation of civil society as purely secular and as the product of primary individuals. To the old school of political economists we must ascribe the popularizing of English political philosophy. And from all these sources commingled we draw everything that is most characteristic of our speculations concerning individual liberty and the function of society.



III.

*SOCIETY AND ITS MEMBERS.*



### III.

#### *SOCIETY AND ITS MEMBERS.*

OF all the theories touched upon in the preceding chapter, the sociological is the only one accepted by many enlightened men at the present day. This theory supposes that the character of the individual determines the character of the society. As the individual is a natural unit, so is the society a natural organism. Its evolution resembles the physical evolution. On this hypothesis the individual is prior to the society ; and the development of society is an unconscious natural process which we need not trouble ourselves to regulate, because, by means which we cannot control, it tends to a result which we cannot modify, and by unavailing interference we only prolong and embitter the suffering and degradation which it may involve. Therefore the practical conclusion is obvious, that government, law, and public opinion should as nearly as possible do nothing at all, or if they do anything they should only do that which will hasten the necessary evolution.

Hereafter I hope to inquire whether or no society is merely a natural organism developing in a merely natural manner. In the present chapter I shall confine myself to examining the statement that the qualities of the individual determine the qualities of the society. Can we really deduce society from the individual as described by biology and psychology ?

What individual is the subject of these sciences? Is it the individual as he exists in any living society? Is it the individual as he might exist out of all society? Are we able to form a clear and precise conception of such an individual? Or when we picture to ourselves an individual existing out of all society, from whose attributes the attributes of society may be deduced, do we not unknowingly restore to our imaginary individual the endowment of an actual individual, so as to deduce society from the individual whom society has made? May it not be that the individual as social can be studied only in society? May it not be that society and the social unit so involve each other that neither can be deduced from the other, or at least that either can equally well be deduced from either?

I think that even if we look upon society as a merely physical organism, we shall find that the attributes of the society as much determine the attributes of the individual as the attributes of the individual determine the attributes of the society. Let us dwell upon this point a little more fully.

To the bodily eye the individual appears something distinct from and independent of all other individuals. I can picture to myself a last man, the individual animal surviving in a world whence all his fellow-creatures have departed; I can even imagine such a being, after heaven and earth have passed away, freely suspended in pure ether to enjoy a few moments of precarious life. So likewise I can picture to myself primitive men in mind and body not very dissimilar to myself, but not united in any form of social organization. Thus I am quite prepared to hear that society is composed of individual men and women, and that I can



understand society by studying the individual, and in no other way. I study the individual life in all its phases from the animal to the ideal. I collect all that has been discovered and recorded concerning the individual. I endeavour to bring before my imagination all the attributes with which the individual is furnished, all the actions which the individual performs. These actions and these attributes are the individual; at least they are all in the individual which I can know or which I can express, and therefore they include everything in the individual which has any interest or any consequence for me; they make up all that I understand by the word individual. For if the philosophy of experience comes to anything, it comes to this, that reality is something which we can understand and express, not a thin, ghostly, metaphysical figment.

Coming to look at the attributes and the actions of an individual, I find that these attributes are nothing more or less than the relations of the individual to other things, and that these actions are merely the particular instances of general relations. Since the individual is but a concise formula for the total of actions and attributes, it follows that the individual, out of relation to other things, is literally nothing. I will not hurt his feelings by calling him a bundle of relations, but I cannot allow him to be anything more than a system of relations. If this be so, I shall understand the individual only when I understand the relations existing between him and everything else. The individual as moral and political I shall know only in knowing his relations with other moral and political individuals. These are what we call his social relations. In order to know these relations, however, I must know the structure of society. Thus I find

it impossible to understand the individual without understanding that which the individual is supposed to explain. The plump and solid individual whom I thought such a familiar object, who promised such a solid basis of social speculation, the individual, I say, has shamefully disappointed me; and, instead of serving to explain society, sends me round to society to explain him.

Man may be studied from many points of view; as a body occupying space, as a mechanical power, as a chemical compound, as a living animal, as a spiritual nature. The student of politics studies man as social, as developing society, and by society developed. If he attempts to deduce the nature of society from the nature of man, he must deduce it from the nature of man as social. But this social nature can be known only by knowing its product or its cause; by knowing society. If the social science can be deduced from the sciences of biology and psychology, it is only because these sciences have dealt with man as social. Concerning man abstracted from society these sciences can tell us as much as they can about any other animal. That is to say, they will explain everything save and except the particular fact which we want explained. Of man in isolation, as of the vegetable or animal unit in isolation, we may learn a great deal. We can ascertain the mechanical and chemical properties of the unit. We can ascertain the mechanical, chemical, and physiological properties of the man. We can even ascertain to some extent his mental faculties. But we cannot ascertain the power of producing, in the one instance, the vegetable or animal, in the other the social organism. For powers are known only in their working; tendencies are known only by knowing what

they tend to. Knowing that men produce societies, and what societies are, we may make abstraction of the individual and deduce from the individual the community. The process may be instructive, but it is merely a circle. Everything that is in the conclusion was in the premisses. Of the citizen you only know what you know of the society; of the man who is not a citizen you know for purposes of political science, nothing.

I am well aware that all our common forms of speech and all our inbred prejudices are opposed to this proposition. The individual is a simple sensible object, apparently complete within himself. The society is a complex invisible object, existing only in its members. When we are told that the laws of individual life determine the laws of social life, we seem to hear only the scientific statement of a familiar fact. For even in our own time we have seen multitudes of individuals settle in vacant regions and form states and societies. We have seen the members of great and ancient societies, as it were, take them to pieces and put them together again upon a new plan. Moreover, society works upon the individual with so much power, yet with so much subtlety, so constantly, in such various ways, and so silently, that the individual cannot retrace many steps in the process by which he has been made, but, content with recalling one or two of the latest, he merges all the rest in his own nature, and sees always a little way behind himself that mirage of an abstract social unit from which he may deduce the concrete social organism.

Nevertheless, the doctrine that the society determines the individual, just as much as the individual determines the society, lies at the root of all political science.

Let me endeavour to illustrate my meaning. A cannon-ball in a heap is not strictly the same thing as a cannon-ball by itself. That a cannon-ball at certain points of its surface touches other cannon-balls, sustaining some of them and sustained by others, is a very unimportant fact in the description of the cannon-ball, although a very important fact in the description of the heap. Even in the cannon-ball it makes a difference. It may be said that taken out of the heap the cannon-ball remains a cannon-ball still. This merely means that we continue to call it by the same name as before. We do so because all its more important attributes remain unaltered. But it has suffered a change. Its identity is really impaired.

We shall see this more clearly if we take an attribute more important than the attribute of position. We do say that the cannon-ball is a coloured object; that one of its attributes is colour. Yet the cannon-ball which looked in strong sunlight a dull grey will look black in the twilight, and will be invisible in thick darkness. Here something which we own to be an attribute of the cannon-ball has changed with the change in external objects. It would be very unscientific to take this something as a primary fact which, itself inexplicable, explains other facts.

Take a step further. We are accustomed to see colour change, but we usually find weight constant. We should hardly call the cannon-ball the same if it suddenly became as light as a feather. But in itself the ball has no weight. Were it the only solid object in space it would be weightless. The weight of the cannon-ball implies the existence of our globe, implies through that how many other things!

Let us ascend from a mere collection to an organism,

from a heap of cannon-balls to a plant. Suppose a part of the plant such that, whilst itself developed by the organism, the organism can be reproduced by it. Which attribute of such a part has most interest for the botanist? Is it the weight, size, shape, texture, colour? A material object might be framed having all these, yet of no more concern to the botanist than to any other man. He is interested in this quantity of matter solely because it is part of the plant, because it has been developed from the organism, because another organism of the same kind can be developed from it. For him this is the fundamental, the all-important attribute. And how does he know this attribute? By knowing the plant of which his subject is part. He knows the unit in knowing the organism. Suppose that he had a specimen of the subject, but no specimen of the organism to which it belongs. By what processes of experiment or computation could he reconstruct the whole from the part? He would have some trouble in reaching by methods purely mathematical, mechanical, or chemical his purely botanical result.

Returning to the proposition that society determines the individual quite as much as the individual determines the society, we may enforce it by illustrations drawn from the entire range of modern science. For in the growth of language, of institutions, of belief, in the customs and conventions of civilized life, there is a great deal which is unconscious and in that sense natural. But only in these later ages has this natural development inspired any serious interest. At the present day it fixes the exclusive attention of many students of social science. They are bent to find in history only the record of a natural evolution. I

cannot agree with them. Growing out of the unconscious, there is the conscious development; growing out of the natural, there is the moral life. The conscious and moral growth of society will hereafter claim our attention. But everything which modern science has determined respecting the natural and unconscious evolution of society tends to show that society does quite as much in making the individual as the individual does in making the society. Numberless instances will suggest themselves to the reader. Here we must be content with selecting one or two.

Consider first of all the results of modern physiology. It had been known for ages that men and beasts inherit the bodily qualities of their race. Every attempt to improve the breed of horses, cattle, or dogs involves the belief that size of bone and quality of muscle, as well as the animal virtues of endurance and spirit, are transmitted from generation to generation. Every intelligent observer of human affairs had noticed how an ill-fed race dwindles and a well-fed race waxes in stature and strength; how a luxurious race gradually becomes sterile and dies out, whilst a hardy race multiplies and fills the earth. But modern physiology has shown us how to measure with unparalleled accuracy the effect produced by the conditions of our bodily life. It has brought into view many such conditions previously unknown. In former times men knew next to nothing about the brain and nervous system. To civilized man these are the most important elements in his physical constitution. There is not one trivial fact in the history of his ancestors which has not left its trace upon these. His present nervous constitution furnishes a complete record of the entire course of civilization. His

special power to do a given kind of work, his special susceptibility to a given kind of pleasure are alike inherited. He comes into the world with half his education accomplished.

Nor is this all. His brain and nervous system have been developed at the expense of his whole body. His bodily capacities and sensibilities are altogether different from those of a savage. His bodily functions and appetites are very different from those of any remote ancestor. Having quite other feelings and faculties, he will have quite another life. And this life, reacting upon his constitution, will heighten all its peculiar qualities. So that even if we regard them as mere animals, a civilized man and a barbarian are animals differing very widely from one another. And the key to this difference is found in the history of society.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has illustrated this truth in a manner so ingenious and fertile as to leave little to be said by those who come after him. We may not admit his conclusions. Indeed all physiological explanations of spiritual phenomena assume in their explanation the very thing which has to be explained. It is a mistake to identify the man with the nervous system. Knowledge is not a state of the nerves, but the state of the nerves does limit our power of acquiring knowledge. Art is not a state of the nerves, but art is impossible without a fine nervous susceptibility to form, colour, and sound. Those who reject a physiological explanation of the soul need not underrate the influence of physical conditions upon spiritual life. They do not deny the fact because they reject its popular interpretation.

If, therefore, every man is born with a constitution which is the result of human development in general and of the development of his own society in particular, it should seem

that thus far we need not hope to find in him a something which determines society without being determined by it. In order to know why he is so constituted we have to retrace an endless series of actions and events whose consequences he inherits, but in which he bore no part. Instead of explaining society by reference to him, we have to explain him by reference to society.

Next to our bodily constitution our native language is the most momentous condition of our life. Formerly men thought that articulate speech must be either an immediate gift of God to man, or else a set of sonorous symbols agreed on by men among themselves. Philology has proved to us that language is neither the one nor the other. Philology teaches that language has a growth of its own ; a growth of whose later stages only we are conscious ; a growth which we can do little to hasten, retard, or divert. This, again, does not imply that language is something irrational. If we had no ideas we should not have names which recall ideas. But what these names shall be and how they shall be modified depends far less on our own will than on our physical structure and on our surroundings. Moreover, since language has been growing for thousands of years, it must needs act upon any one individual far more forcibly than that individual can react on it.

Language is the record of accumulated thought. At any period in the history of a nation the state of its language affords a most delicate and sensitive index to the state of its mind. Language indeed is as much inferior to thought as our execution is inferior to our ideal. Men are constrained to utter their thoughts in words which fail to express all that they would say, which, in expressing, distort their



sense. As the word which stands for an idea passes through the several stages of its history, the idea likewise undergoes successive transformations. As the term grows familiar its import becomes thin. At length the once pregnant word becomes like the Sibyl, a mere voice, an empty sound.

Language is also the mould of all new thought. Unless we are students of some abstruse science, we cannot coin new names for new ideas. Perforce we must use old words, and if we are so fortunate as not to be misled by their old associations, we cannot hope an equal good fortune for all whom we address. Thus metaphysicians have been involved in hopeless contradiction by an unguarded use of terms such as mind and matter, God and the world, which they had adopted from the vulgar tongue without purging them of vulgar vagueness and incoherence. Even when they have used a proper accuracy in language they have appeared triflers or heretics, because the same term meant one thing to them, another to their hearers. The few who tried to create an artificial language have found it imperfect, rigid, and unpopular.

Thus, in learning the language of his people, a man receives their intellectual inheritance, and erects his own intellectual barriers. His national speech is all the more potent over him because it works upon him when a child. When he has attained to manhood, the ideas which it embodies seem to him either the discoveries of his own unaided reason or the direct lessons of nature. Oftenest he would reject as quibbling impertinence any suggestion that the idea, like the word, has had a history of its own. He does not suspect how many of his beliefs, how much of his scepticism has no other foundation than an inconsiderate acceptance of

thoughts, which seem clear because the sounds representing them are familiar. Philology demonstrates in respect of the content of thought the same truth which physiology demonstrates in respect of its physical instrument: that previous ages have accumulated the one as they have shaped the other. Everybody, indeed, does something, a few persons do a great deal, to enlarge and to recast thought; but in considering men as members of an organism merely natural we have to overlook for a moment a truth which we must on no account let out of sight.

Let us pass to other aspects of life, in which unconscious growth so blends with conscious effort that anything we can at present say must be even more inadequate to their subtlety. The individual on entering into life, enters into the fellowship of a political community, marshalled on certain principles, making use of certain institutions, and expressing itself by means of certain organs. Long before he was born, his parents and teachers, his friends and neighbours, everything that he is destined to see, everything that he is destined to hear has felt the pervasive force of social organization. Long before he has himself become a fully qualified citizen, he has been stamped with the impress of his state. Institutions have done more than prescribe the education which he shall receive. They are in themselves an education.

In its origin the organization of society is almost as natural as the organization of an animal or a plant. Civil society began in the instinctive effort to satisfy the most imperious wants of animal nature; in the effort to preserve oneself and to continue one's kind. Everything higher than this, the state as we know it, the individual as we are

familiar with him, the notions of universal law and of personal freedom, all has been slowly worked out in an immense lapse of time. For researches into the early history of institutions have brought home to us two great political truths; firstly, that the social union is ever growing in compass as well as in closeness; secondly, that freedom both of body and mind has grown with the growth of the social union. The sphere of law and the sphere of liberty are really one.

In the patriarchal grade of social development, man is not wholly the creature of instinct; but he is the creature of status. Usage has gained what impulse has lost. In this grade each man is born into a condition which can be modified only by the destruction of his community. Perhaps he is born a slave; perhaps he is born a chief; in either case he is born to do and say certain set deeds and words his whole life through. The poverty of his social is as the poverty of his private life. Society has not extended beyond the bounds of the family. Every one, as a great scholar tells us, is either a kinsman, a slave, or an enemy. Yet the family life, the only social life, appears hard and inflexible. Custom and humanity limit the despotism exercised by husband and father; but he remains a despot nevertheless. At a time when the family affords the only social life, grace, sweetness, and sentiment are not to be looked for in the family.

By slow degrees the family expands into a village or a tribe; next, the half-fictitious tie of kindred binds together an ever-growing multitude; at length the civic tie unites in a hundred noble and beautiful relations those who claim no bond of kinship. In its turn the civic spirit expands into a national patriotism, and finally religion and philosophy carry

man beyond the bounds even of his nation to feel a brotherhood with all men. But in becoming the member of a larger, he does not cease to be the member of a smaller society; he does not exchange one social bond for another; he adds tie to tie, and each tie strengthens all the rest. In the concentric growth of sympathy, the inner rings grow firm as the outer rings widen. Patriotism does not impoverish family affection, nor does philanthropy exclude patriotism. It is through the lesser that we become members of the greater society. It is by caring for those who are near that we become able to care for those who are remote. Even Rousseau bids us beware of that cosmopolitan humanity which loves the Tartars that it may be excused from loving its neighbours. But infinite is the capacity of true kindly feeling; infinite the number and variety of associations to which it gives life. Every new association is not an inroad upon our individual life, but a new development thereof. He who is enlisted in all the graduated divisions of social life, from the little circle which surrounds his hearth to the mighty circle which embraces the whole world, him we call free, and not the unhappy, naked, houseless soul that owns no membership in any brotherhood.

Until we realize how much institutions may vary, we cannot realize how much every one owes to the institutions of his society. It makes a great difference whether a man be born in France or in Britain; it makes a far greater difference whether he be born in the Britain of our day, in the Rome of the Emperors, in the Athens of Pericles, or in the India of the Vedas. And in this difference, the difference of institutions is no small part. Institutions are to the practical what language is to the speculative life, the record

and the sum of man's inherited wealth. Like language, institutions furnish a point of departure, define a method of action, supply a material for production. Like language, they have a growth historical only in its later stages. Like language, they embody ideas always a trifle obsolete; are never accurately conformed either to the circumstances or the wishes of the present generation; and link us to a past which at once limits and makes possible our own achievements. According to our ability we criticize what we inherit; we add, we take away, we modify, we protest, we rebel, and after all we bring far less than we receive. As purely natural and unconscious beings who make not, but are made, we owe so much to the institutions which we possess that it is idle to speculate on what we might have been without them.

In undertaking social duties men have a certain freedom of choice. In the first instance, it rests with each of us to decide whether or no he will marry and bring up children; whether he will accept trusts, enter into contracts, make his will, commit civil or criminal injuries. But probably he never does realize the full significance of any such act. Moved by the interest or the inclination, perhaps, of a day, of an hour, he does an act whose consequences fill the whole of his life, whose consequences are determined neither by chance nor by his own free will. All the rights and duties arising out of our most important dealings with our fellow-men have been defined by law; law is the result of an immense political growth; law in its highest form is one of the most artificial products of civilized society. The very idea of inflexible general rules of conduct imposed upon each man by the will of all, is an idea foreign to the mind of primitive

nations. The simplest legal conceptions, the conceptions of a crime, a tort, a contract, a trust, a will, conceptions now easy and familiar to all educated men, conceptions which have helped to furnish out our speculative life, which have done so much to fashion morals and politics, these conceptions have been developed to their present fulness and precision by numberless forgotten practitioners of a dull and abstruse science. The modern refinements of jurisprudence are unknown to nearly all who either make or obey the law; but to these refinements we owe a great deal which we ascribe to the workings of plain common sense.

Moreover, law develops so slowly, and in its growth comes to touch upon so many interests that it becomes a record of the whole course of human affairs. Law has felt every revolution, not in politics alone, but in religion, in philosophy, in commerce, and in the useful arts. These numberless revolutions have all contributed to the legal definition of every one of our rights and duties. With the definition of rights and duties goes the stress of public opinion in maintaining the one and in enforcing the other. That which law and public opinion decide proper to do we find right and agreeable to do. Since our character is made by our actions, the rule of action at last becomes the principle of character. We are made vicious or virtuous by Act of Parliament.

Ascending into a higher region, we still find that the religion of the society becomes the religion of the individual. Like language and like political institutions, religion has for the modern inquirer a significance which it could not have for the learned of other ages. This in two ways. For in the first place the extended research and the scientific criti-

cism of modern times have enabled us to trace the unity and development of religious life. And in the second place a deeper insight has led many to see more distinctly what in former ages men have blindly felt, that as the whole practical life of man is but the manifestation of his spiritual life, so his whole spiritual life centres round religious ideas. It is easy to see how this new way of looking at religion bears upon our present subject, the relation of the individual to the society.

The accepted theory of religion was formerly very simple. One religion was saving and true; all other religions were false and futile. The doctrines of the true religion were contained in certain books and interpreted by certain rules. These books were read without any feeling for the life of the society which had produced them. These rules were laid down in order to support a preconceived theory as to the meaning of the books. The true religion was something complete and rigid. It had no past and it had no future. Its lessons were lessons of pure, abstract, lifeless truth. Between religion and life, as between the Deity and the world, the orthodox drew a line which none might presume to cross. How differently have modern scholars taught us to think about religion! They have enabled us to see the continuity which underlies all religious revolutions, and the unity which branches into all religious variations. They have accustomed us to the idea of one always progressive, always imperfect revelation. They have elaborated into a law of history the old theological notion of successive dispensations and of many preachers each greater than the last. They have shed a strong light upon the subtle action and reaction of the religious and the practical life.

They have explained how religion, art, philosophy, independent and conflicting as they so often seem, are yet but emanations of the same mind and fruits of the same endeavour.

Those who are most hostile to what they esteem superstition tell us that religion began in the emotion of primitive men. Visions and omens excited wonder; the sun's warmth and light, gratitude; pestilence, tempest, and earthquake, terror, and out of these blind feelings religion arose. Be it so. Primitive man felt that in the universe there was something greater and stronger than himself. Yet he also felt that this something was, if not himself, at least a partaker of his own nature. In short, he felt at once the insignificance of man and man's kinship with that which makes him insignificant. This may well have been the first religion; for is it not the latest? Out of this emotion have sprung all kinds of worship; the worship of fetishes, the worship of Zeus and Apollo, the worship of an incarnate God, the worship of the universe as a universe of law and order. The mystery and the terror, the hope and faith that were with men in the beginning have not departed from men in our day. The doctrines, the discipline, the ceremonies of any national religion have a history wide as the surface of the earth, and far extended as man's course thereon.

Men speak of rejecting the religion of their country, of rejecting all religion. The symbols and formulas of religion they may indeed reject; but they cannot efface the impression which religion has made upon their inmost life. Religion consisting not in certain propositions, but rather in a mode of construing all propositions, is not a part of the furniture of the mind, is not a set of movables, a collection of ideas, or anything else which can be stored up or cleared



out. It is a life, a way of thinking, a tone of mind. For men of all persuasions the national religion constitutes the starting-point of all spiritual life. It has informed with its spirit philosophy, literature, law, all institutions and all practical energies. It does more to shape the character of those who seriously revolt than of those who thoughtlessly acquiesce. Between the freethinkers of the Catholic and the Protestant worlds are drawn lines of severance far more sharp and clear than those which part the correct, formal, and indifferent orthodox of either of these communions.

It is not too much to say that the individual owes his religion to society. I do not mean to ignore the personal nature of all the best religion, or the inward experience which precedes all true religious life. The awakening of a sense of religion has been figured by the religious mind as a coming out of bondage. But this enfranchisement of the soul more properly belongs to a phase of social life on which we must touch hereafter. For the present we may point out that the idea of a new birth is of moment only in the highest religions, and represents the spiritual experience of very few professors. Besides, the most intense spiritual fervour can never wholly fuse, the highest spiritual intelligence can never wholly recast the doctrine and discipline of any great communion. In religion that which men inherit is often the whole, is always a great part of that which they possess.

Thus far we have spoken of formative powers, which affect almost equally every member of a society. We have only mentioned a few. Other forces there are which act very variously on various classes in the same society; the forces of rank, education, profession, associates, and amuse-

ments. As forces of the one kind produce a national type, so forces of the other kind produce diversity of types within the nation. Long ago Adam Smith contrasted the two codes of morality received, the one among the rich, the other among the poor, and pointed out how in either case men unconsciously adapt their morality to their conditions of life. He showed how the wealthy for the most part are lenient to pleasant, the poor for the most part severe against expensive vices. Since pleasant vice is usually expensive, it follows that the poor regard with most harshness those vices which obtain most indulgence from the rich. When Adam Smith wrote, an aristocracy still dictated the fashions; and therefore the moral standard which they accepted was in some measure the moral standard accepted by the whole community.

De Tocqueville, writing about the middle of the interval which separates us from Adam Smith, saw everywhere predominant the spirit of the middle class. He noted as their distinguishing characteristic the blending of a little philanthropy with a great deal of business. Their ideal was a life of diffused material enjoyment which should by turns gratify every sense and every vanity without offending against any of the decorums, and, whilst worldly to the inmost fibre, should not trouble the conscience with the impression of any distinct sin. What De Tocqueville described in America and France everybody may now see at home. Political power has passed from the middle to the working class. But as yet the middle class continues to give the moral standard.

It is these changes in moral fashions consequent upon social revolutions which in ages like our own impart

the flattering conviction of easy and rapid moral progress. Each age has its own customary morality. One sort of virtue is of more avail in a martial, another in an industrial age. Among a nation of warriors a stout heart, an open hand, a truthful tongue are almost the only qualities held in high esteem. Among a nation of traders, sobriety, industry, and frugality are of much more account. And the virtues which are most liberally rewarded, which attract most good-will, procure most influence, and kindle best the genial glow of self-approbation are the only virtues which common-place people will desire to possess or to seem to possess. We reckon our own age the most virtuous ever known. That is to say, in our own age we find a great deal of that kind of goodness which the age appreciates. The roystering vices are discredited and the decent vices are not conspicuous. Even selfishness has acquired the reverend air of painful duty. Sensuality itself has become serious, methodic, complex, dull. Pleasure has become a task, and excess a fine art. We may not be as virtuous as we suppose, but we are more respectable than men ever were before.

In every age society demands that the citizen shall be respectable. What respectability implies will be something different in every age, and in every rank of life. But it is always through our perception of the uses and pleasures of respectability, finally passing into the instinctive love of respectability, that our souls absorb at every pore the current morality of our nation, our class, or our calling. Nor need we much regret that nature will have it so. For the great mass of men can attain no higher life than the life of decorous custom. Of course

he who thinks and wills for himself is alone moral or immoral in the deepest sense. His character is his own. The good man of this type, the man of reasoned and heroic virtue, is indeed above affection and above reverence. But in so far as men of celestial purity and sweetness fulfil their task, they fulfil it by raising institutions and public opinion to a higher level, by lifting customary morality above itself, by softening the caricature of excellence called respectability. Thus regarding civil society in its merely natural aspect, we are justified in saying that the moral life of every man is rooted in respectability; that it is based upon feelings and habits, which he had absorbed before he could judge them; that he has the morals of his community and of his class.

For the vast majority of men the rank into which they are born determines their education and their profession. The power of education has passed into the stalest of trite proverbs. In shaping a man's character, which is his destiny, a bad education counts for quite as much as a good one. When we say that a man has had no education we do not mean what we say. If he has learnt to be idle and incapable, he has learnt a great deal. If he has learnt doctrines which he will discard as soon as he reaches maturity, he may have learnt a more momentous lesson than if he had enriched himself with the whole body of demonstrated truth. All receive an education; the street-arab no less than the peer, the pass-man who takes orders no less than the senior wrangler. If that which we call education should seem less powerful than other influences, such as the influence of a profession, we must remember that it comes first, and works upon us when yet fresh and plastic.

No man gets an original education. The accepted method of training the intelligence has a history quite as long as the history of the accepted method of administering justice. And all new methods are defined by the degree in which they preserve or reject what is ancient. Thus Rousseau's *Emilius* is educated on the principle of excluding from his culture everything which could make him either a pedant or a *petit-maitre*. Had not the *petit-maitre* and the pedant flourished in Rousseau's time, Rousseau's pupil had received quite another training. For this is the subtlety of social influences, that when we spurn them most we feel them most. And again, very few receive an education so ideal and so free as to be limited only by the measure of contemporary wisdom. We are all educated to do something; and most of us are educated to no other end.

In guiding the energies which it has trained, society does something through the direct action of government, but more through the indirect action of public opinion. A government employs more labour than any private individual or collection of individuals can do. The public esteem in which a calling is held more than anything else makes it alluring or repulsive. It is idle to say that men will choose or ought to choose their own profession. They seldom have any choice whatever. Few men have any true vocation for any particular work; and men who feel a call feel hunger too. Chance, family prejudice, or worldly emolument determine almost everybody in choosing his means of earning a livelihood. Each of these motives derives much of its weight from law and public opinion. Wise institutions and a healthy public opinion insure the best of all economies, an economy of individual talent and energy.

As but one illustration of the influence exercised by society upon the individual's choice of a pursuit, contrast the bar of England with the Continental bureaucracy. On the Continent the administration is all-pervading and restless, and to serve in the administration is accounted highly honourable. Under these circumstances a very great proportion of the ability of a Continental nation is enlisted in the service of its government. In England the administration is neither so powerful nor so much considered. But political power has for many generations been wielded by an aristocracy, and the profession of the law has afforded to the common people the readiest entrance into the ranks of the aristocracy, and the most convenient avenue to political power. Accordingly it has been invested with something of the vague magnificence which in other countries or at other times attaches to the military or to the clerical calling. During many years it has been crowded to a degree which neither its inherent attractions nor the gains of its practitioners could justify. Man's appetite for wealth can be satisfied, but his appetite for fame and power is insatiable. Power and fame are in the gift of society, so that society can always determine the object of individual ambition and the channel of individual effort.

A man's calling continues the work which his education has begun, gives him his final character as an organ of the social body, and subdues to the purposes of this organ all his natural energies and aptitudes. It is not merely that the members of each profession do one particular kind of work. Their whole life is fashioned to its requirements. No doubt we do submit to a barbarous prejudice when we demand from those who follow the various walks of life a merely profes-

sional virtue, a merely professional intelligence; yet this prejudice is too strong for most of us. Neither the opinion of the public nor the opinion of his brethren requires a soldier to be as temperate and chaste as a divine; a man of business to be as frank and generous as a soldier; a barrister to be as modest as a scholar or as sentimental as an artist; or a politician to be as truthful in public as every gentleman must be in private life. On the other hand we do presume a soldier to be brave and loyal; a man of business to be thrifty and laborious; a barrister to be true to his client; a politician to be faithful, always to his party, and as often as circumstances allow to the state.

Again, as every kind of handicraft develops some special kind of bodily skill and strength, whilst it also induces some peculiar disease or deformity, so does each of the more liberal professions at once stimulate and blight the intellectual powers. The learning requisite for any one of these professions can be mastered only by prolonged and vigorous exertion. A professional education is therefore a severe gymnastic. But it is often arbitrary in its scope and method. It must not be carried beyond a certain stage by those who would turn it to good account. For public opinion is the first and greatest of those natural forces which we can rule only by obeying. To convince others that we are fit to do our work is just as hard and just as indispensable as to be really fit to do it. This conviction we impart to our neighbours by doing as other men who pursued our calling have been known to do. In a profession dulness may now and then succeed; originality never can. And the constant endeavour to comply with the opinion of the public at large, creates within every profession a secondary public

opinion, which is more intense and more searching, because it is concentrated in a few persons who live and work together.

Enforced by this double public opinion, the discipline of a profession comes to resemble the discipline of a monastic order. The sanction of involuntary poverty operates quite as terribly as the sanction of foot-gyves and limbo, or even the sanction of hell-fire. And no head of a religious body is more inquisitive, more rigid, more confined in his views than public opinion. Nature determines the conditions under which we must work if we are to work well; convention determines the forms which we must observe if our work is to fetch a good price; convention and nature alike make a liberal payment indispensable to us. We think ourselves free to do what we please, to do it as we please, and when we have done it to be what we please. Alas! we flatter ourselves in vain; our work is chosen for us, our way of doing it was fixed before we were born, and we are what the labours of our life have made us. Few there are who elude this hard necessity of things.

But why should we any further pursue a train of reflection as obvious as it is endless? Setting aside, for the moment, all problems of moral freedom and responsibility, looking at ourselves and our fellows merely as children of nature, can we claim anything as our own, can we say of one feature, one look, one accent, one emotion, one thought, one fancy, that for it we are indebted only to ourselves? Where shall we find in ourselves anything self-centred or self-created? What can the most acute inquiry detect in any man, great or little, wise or foolish, learned or unlearned, beyond an infinite susceptibility, a measureless possibility, a capacity of learn-



ing which is never satisfied, a pliancy to circumstance which is never exhausted? In the individual what is there which is truly individual? Is he anything more than an often-scrawled, much-blurred record of the lives that have been, and prophecy of the lives that are to be? Yes, he is something more than this. But this something more is nothing known to natural science. It is something which the methods of natural science can never seize. It must evade philosophers who carry into the study of politics only the conceptions of physics. In discussion with these philosophers, therefore, we are justified in supposing for an instant that this something is merely nothing.

The individual apart from history is something which we cannot really comprehend. We cannot understand a contemporary Irishman or a Frenchman of the last century. How could we so much as form the thinnest idea of an individual not the child of any society whatever? Shall we try to deduct from a living concrete individual all that he owes to society in order that the residuum may supply data for social calculation? Shall we try to add to the common nature of all the higher animals something found only in man? We are not fit to perform either operation, for we ourselves are not fixed or determinate, but are ever moving and changing with the change and movement of the world. Human nature is not fit to undergo either operation, for it is the result, not of addition, but of growth. Man is an organism. As such, his organization infers a special character in every part. Change but one iota in his constitution, and he is another creature. You cannot take him to pieces; you can study him only as a whole. As a whole he is found only in society, and there he must be studied by the social inquirer.

What difference would it make in the proportion and the charm of the Apollo Belvidere if he were an inch shorter? A consummate mathematician could not find formulas to express the change made in any of the divine curves; nor could a consummate critic express the change of a beholder's feeling in words delicate enough to express just the exact shade of emotion. But if the shape of a carved stone be a thing so subtle, how much more subtle are the body and soul of a living man! How hopeless to find the first elements of society in an ideal man made by eliminating from the actual man everything that gives substance or life to our conception of humanity!

Abstracting from the individual all the relations with other individuals which become possible at birth and actual during life, we find at the end of the process no individual remaining. Abstracting from society these very relations, we reduce society to an unsocial crowd. Therefore in order to understand either society or the individual, the state or the citizen, we must know, not one person, nor a multitude of persons, but those persons in their mutual relations. That is to say, we must investigate their religion, their art, their literature, their science, their laws, and their government, their methods of producing and principles of distributing wealth, their language, customs, conventions, fashions, opinions, and amusements. These, indeed, make up the society; these are its attributes, its character, its life, its substance. Everything else is only the sensuous embodiment of these.

In the science of politics, as in all other sciences, we must begin with that which is familiar to us: the visible state, and the visible citizen. But as we go on these refine them-

selves into a system of relations which constitute social life ; in knowing which we know society and man. These relations we have to discover, to define, to connect, to classify ; and how shall we succeed in doing this ? We can succeed only by prolonged study of living societies.

The true method of social science appears then to be the historical method. Historians may have been often untrue to that method. They may have been shallow, credulous, rhetorical. But history alone can supply the material for a science of society. If we would understand the social organism, we must study the organism itself instead of attempting to compute its character from the character of its parts. For in this attempt we are endeavouring to find a primary and a secondary where they do not exist. Somebody may object that in other sciences, such as physiology, the method arraigned here has proved sound and fruitful. The physiologist does indeed separate for the purpose of study cells and tissues which can never live apart from the frame which they complete. But the physiologist does not imagine that by studying these cells and tissues in their isolation he can understand their functions or the life of the whole body. It is because he is acquainted with the whole that he can profitably inquire concerning the parts.

Bones, muscles, sinews, nerves, and veins do not so much as seem to live apart. The men and women who make up society do seem to have a life of their own. Thus the sociologist falls into a snare easily avoided by the physiologist. His method is as if a physiologist should first cut up the subject into brain, heart, stomach, liver, and so forth, and should then deduce from properties found to be common to all these mangled parts the law of life for the living animal. Of course

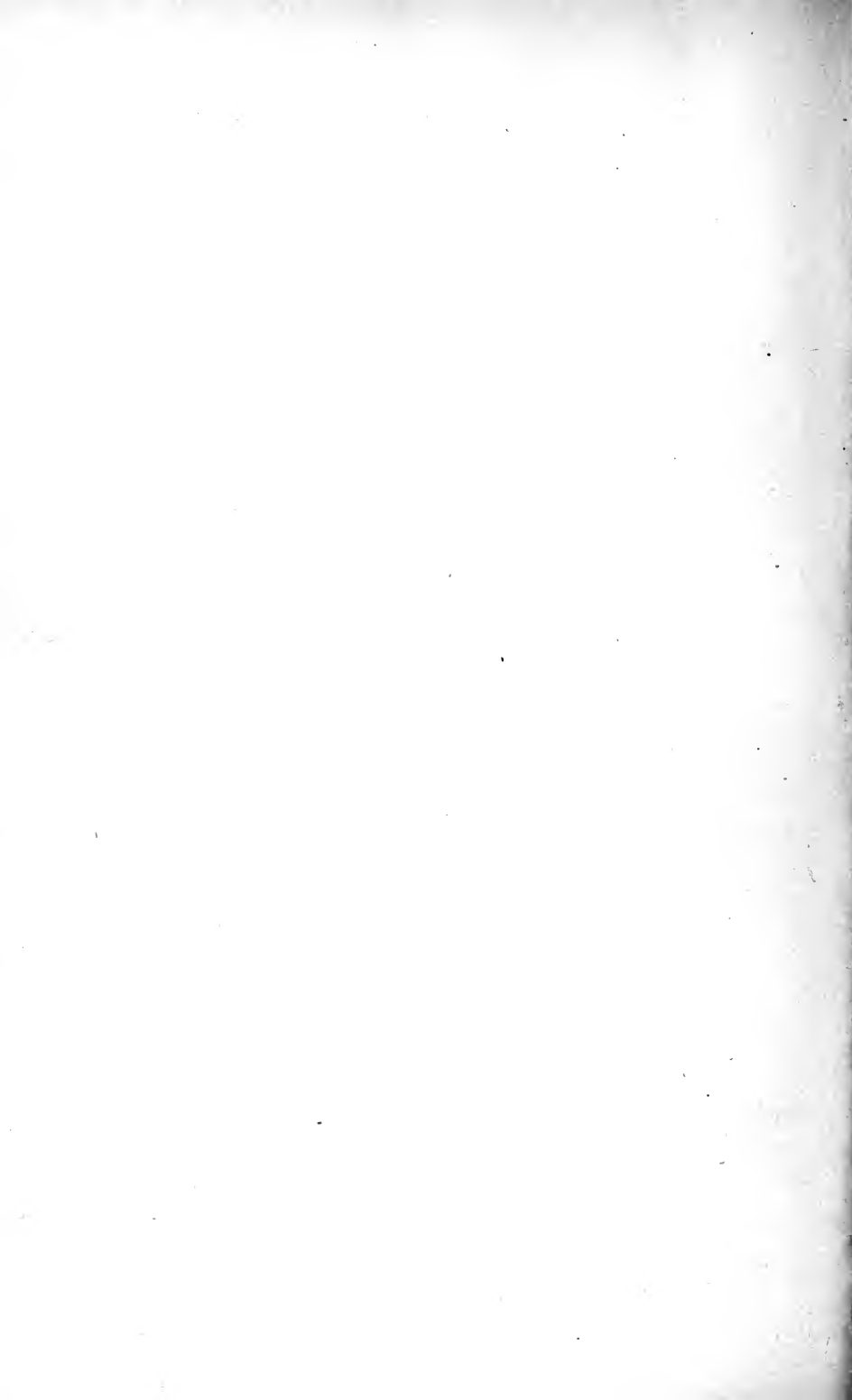
the parts looked at in that disconnection, dull and spiritless, have no properties in common, save certain properties chemical and mechanical. But puzzle yourself as long as you will, and out of laws merely mechanical and chemical you will extract nothing but chemical and mechanical laws.

The sociologist says, "By studying individuals as they are I shall arrive at a knowledge of their common nature. This nature I will formulate in laws biological and psychological; and by the help of these laws I will explain everything that can be explained in living societies." To this one might reply, "In order to study individuals as they are, you must study society as it is. Individuals as they are cannot be understood unless we understand society. Society modifies even their bodily structure. Their mental constitution is very much what society has made it. In short, knowledge of the individual is knowledge of the society. But if you study the individual in the fashion which you propose to adopt, your knowledge of the individual will be neither complete nor precise. You will not know the individual as social, and therefore you will not derive from your acquaintance with him any aids to your theory of society.

In postulating the constituent part the sociologist forgets that he is postulating its most essential attribute, the one attribute which gives a meaning to all the rest the attribute of being a constituent part. And thus between the parts of society he can establish a merely mechanical union. Even that union he establishes only by restoring to the parts a very little of their organic character. An aggregate is made up of units, but an organism lives in its members. Separate the members from the organism, reduce the mem-

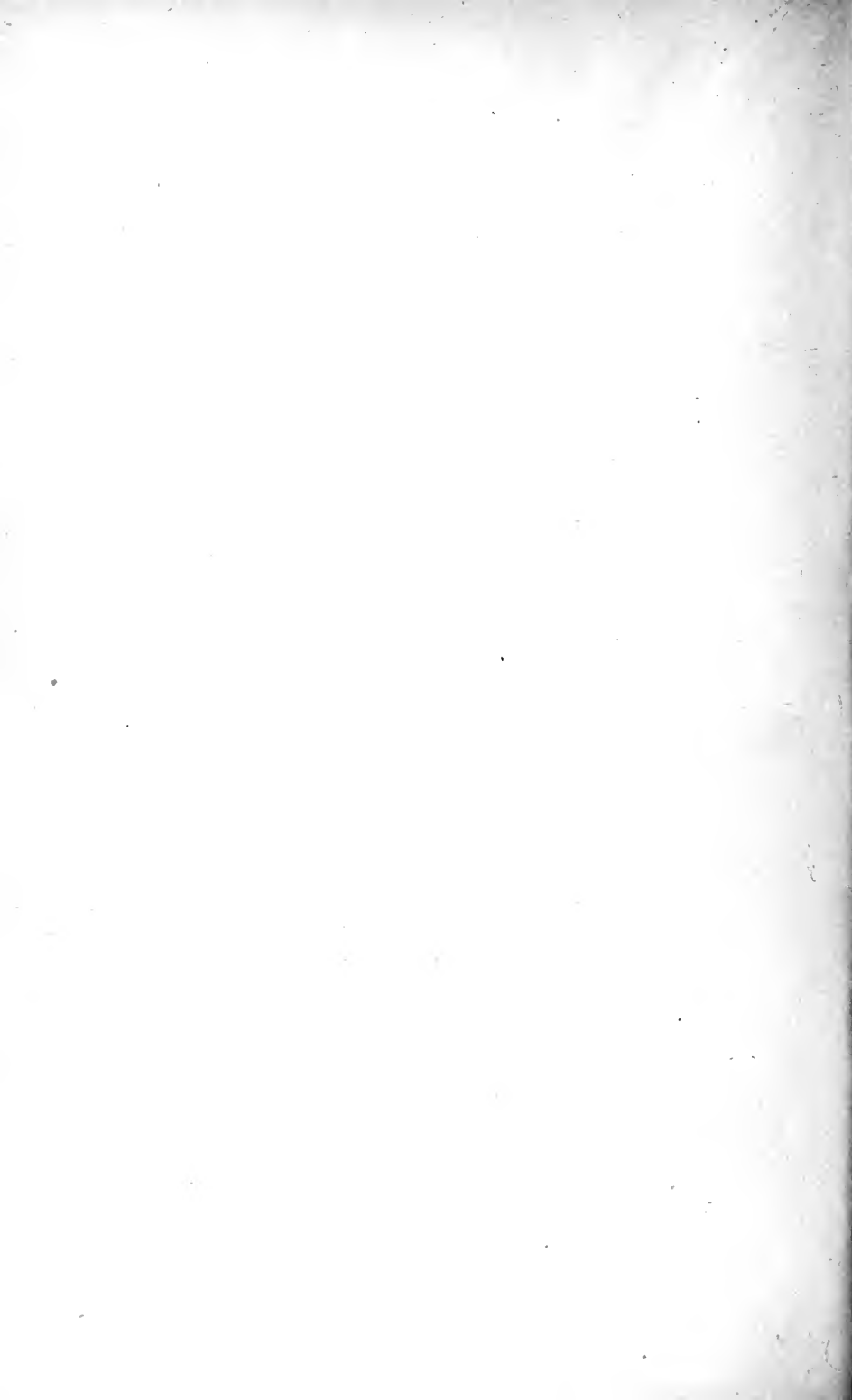
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bers to mere inorganic qualities of matter, the citizen to an individual, the individual to a bundle of attributes, each attribute to a bundle of sensations or emotions, and when you have crumbled the warm, palpitating creature into a dust as fine, as dry, as destitute of life as the dust of Egyptian kings, then sift it, weigh it, drop pinches of it into test tubes, vex it with all the tortures of the laboratory, and it will endure all this in patient and contemptuous silence; it will not surrender to such child-like inquirers the fine secret of its impalpable life; but it will tell them all that they are open to learn; and that is precisely as much as they would have learned from any other handful of common clay.



IV.

*PROGRESS.*





## IV.

### *PROGRESS.*

HITHERTO we have considered society as though it were an organism of the same type with physical organisms. For the sake of simplicity, it seemed best so to do. But this way of considering society is always apt to mislead, for society is something more than a physical organism. It is composed of individuals who are something more than physical. As in the individual, so in the society the natural and unconscious is but the basis of the conscious and rational. In so far as the individual and the society remain natural, they are related to each other somewhat as in an animal a limb to the whole body. The animal tends to develop a multiplicity of useful organs, which become more mutually dependent as they become more numerous, so that the animal organism grows at once in complexity and in unity. The society tends to develop in just the same way. Those who regard it as a merely natural organism would say that it can only develop thus, that only this kind of social improvement is possible.

But in the conscious and reasoning life, the society and the individual are related to one another in a way unknown to natural science. In this life the individual seeks to be not merely a part, but a whole. He is not content to be a mere

pinion in the great machine. He cannot work without having an object in which he finds satisfaction. Feeling this to be necessary for himself, he also feels it to be necessary for other men. And as each individual becomes aware that he and his fellows have, every one, a value and a meaning in themselves, the social development changes character. Society continues to develop as before new organs of life; but each organ now develops as a whole. Its own complete and self-centred perfection has to be reconciled with its perfection as a member and an accessory. Neither perfection can be had by itself; but the two perfections often seem irreconcilable. Hence moral conflicts, loss of energy, waste of happiness, and sometimes total destruction for the individual and for the society. Yet this discord is the condition of a finer harmony. For the development of individuals is the condition of all sympathy; sympathy is the basis of all common action; and it is by the common endeavour of all to attain ends which all desire, that society comes to feel its own unity, to have a soul as well as a body, to be capable of a reasoning progress, and to pass out of the sphere of natural into that of moral science.

The dawn of conscious life in the society, as in the man, is the beginning of a new era. To some societies, as to some men, this dawn never comes. Continuing to be merely physical organisms, they develop passively and blindly. In some societies, as in some men, conscious life seems never to pass certain bounds. Of the one class, we have examples in nations which have never become civilized; of the other, in those Oriental nations whose brilliant civilization has never emerged from childhood. But in no instance does

either the man or the society become fully conscious. In every instance many actions remain unconscious, instinctive, automatic. The merely physical life of society is never annihilated. The most refined type of social union derives much of its strength from its usefulness to individuals in pursuit of sensual or selfish ends. It does not exclude the struggle for existence, or the survival of the fittest; but it includes the pursuit of perfection and the alleviation of misery. It strengthens, and is strengthened by the nobler nature of man. It is cemented by love as well as by appetite, and lives rather by intelligence than by instinct.

Although we never cease to be animals, we soon cease to be mere animals. The association of men is something more than the association of ants or bees. To deal with the human and the animal associations, as though they were variations of a common type, to treat politics as a branch of natural history, is to overlook the distinguishing feature of all civil society,—the fact that it is a society of thinking creatures. Only as conscious do men enter into political life. Only as spiritual are men social. In the evolution of a true society, men are not only instruments, but also agents. Instead of being developed, they develop themselves. This conscious evolution of society, this conscious development of the individual, are the subjects of history in the more restricted sense of that term.

If when men became conscious they merely pursued in a reflective and deliberate manner such objects as alone attract the animal nature, the awakening of conscious thought might seem an event of no great moment in their lives. But it implies much more than this. Conscious beings occupy in relation to one another, and to the uni-

verse, a position altogether peculiar. For, in the first place, consciousness transforms all the old objects of desire. The appetites of the animal creation are limited. Their instinctive wants admit of satisfaction. A beast of prey once gorged, remains at rest until the pangs of hunger return; but the desires of conscious beings have no limit. Conscious beings are for ever drawing ideals from their experience. From their experience of an activity pleasant to them they derive the idea of pleasure, prolonged and heightened indefinitely. Pleasure had been the consequence; it becomes the object of action. In this way the pursuit of pleasure, unknown to the animal, is natural to the man. And from this difference between men and beasts flow many consequences very important in human history.

The struggle for existence between creatures of appetite, and the struggle for existence between creatures of desire, differ greatly in character. Competition among animals is much less keen than competition among men. At the same time, fellow-feeling is more vivid in the nobler creature. He must suffer in the suffering of others; and yet he must prey upon his kind. Whence come, even in very early times, a profound sorrow, a tragic sense of all that man has to do and bear, a doubting whether human life be worth the trouble needed to make it tolerable, a longing for rest even though rest can be found only in annihilation, emotions unknown in the bright world of nature, whose children feel only such impulses as they can appease, seldom feel more than one impulse at a time, know neither fear nor shame in taking what they want, and having taken it, are vexed with no voluptuous longings, no acrid remorse, no presentiment that they will never taste it again.

In the second place, new objects of desire spring out of the perplexities of conscious life. Animals need no morality. But conscious beings cannot dispense with it. For the problem of conduct is incessantly thrust upon them by the contradiction between their infinite longings and finite circumstances. They very soon find that of pleasant sensations they shall never have their fill. They also find that pleasant sensations are not all that they want. Pleasure is theirs whilst it lasts, and when the pleasure departs they have the effect and the remembrance thereof; but the effect is sometimes good, sometimes bad, and the remembrance is a very little thing, rather bitter than sweet. Even whilst their pleasure lasts it is at the mercy of every trifle. For there is no annoyance so petty or so mean but it can defeat the deepest and the purest pleasure. The least chill is enough to dull our enjoyment of the loveliest sunset. The thought of an unpaid bill suffices to spoil the raptures of a poet. And long before men die, long before their noblest powers decay, they begin to lose their first fresh sensibility to pleasure. Thus, finding a life of impulse fail them at every step, they are forced to seek a principle of action. Their success in finding such a principle, and in acting upon it when found, is a prime element in their progress.

Nor is it only a rule of conduct which is necessary to the conscious as distinct from the unconscious creature. He further feels the need of knowledge. To him the universe presents a speculative as well as a practical problem. The development of science is another prime factor in progress. And in groping their way toward a conception of the universe, and a law to guide their own life in it, men come to

have a sense of religion. To define religion is hard ; nor shall we add another to the many bad definitions already in print. But if few can define the term, everybody knows its reference. Religion certainly has been, and in the opinion of many will continue to be, the central fact of human history. All the lines of special development in morals, politics, science, literature, and art, from time to time converge into and radiate out of great religious revolutions. In religion we find a motive power totally unlike anything to be found in nature. The aims, the struggles, the joys and sorrows of the religious life are only for conscious beings. And a theory of progress which should ignore the development of religion would be a theory not worth considering.

Lastly, in conscious creatures the desire of beauty gives rise to art. Perhaps nothing in human nature is more mysterious than the delight which artistic production affords to the artist and his public. Nothing in human history is harder to explain than the artistic evolution. But it remains a feature of all progress ; a feature so important that without it the progress of any people is rightly considered imperfect. And it is the net result of impulses possible only to reflecting minds.

The impulse to virtue, the impulse to science, the impulse to holiness, and the impulse to beauty, all have this much in common—that they are, in a certain sense, impersonal and unselfish. In this they differ from, say, the impulse to accumulate wealth. It is true that the industrial activity arising from my love of gain enriches other men as well as myself. But this result was not what I contemplated, nor does it necessarily give me any satisfaction. On the other hand, the good citizen, the man of science, the saint, and

the artist fulfil their own vocation in helping other men to fulfil theirs. The object of a good or holy life is, in making oneself better or holier, to make others so too. The object of an artist or a man of science is, through the exercise of his own talent, to give at once a stimulus and a satisfaction to the same talent in other men. And the artist or man of science, as well as the good citizen or the saint, finds his own energy heightened in proportion to the number of those who can understand him, feel with him, and in any way act with him. The intrinsic value of taste or knowledge to any one of us varies directly with the number of those who know or appreciate. Every man's goodness and piety grow with the goodness and piety of all around him. Thus through science and art, through morality and religion, a disinterested life becomes possible. Through their operation men are bound together more firmly than by instinct. Through their operation a new, a spiritual evolution is set up. This spiritual evolution is progress in the historical and human sense, progress in human perfection. But its principle is not to be found in the struggle for existence. Its principle is one of mutual helpfulness, and the spring of this helpfulness is a generous love of excellence and of our fellow-men.

Even in the state of nature co-operation is a necessity, and sympathy is a pleasure. But in that state men co-operate for the most part merely in order to secure the means of sustaining animal life. Since life multiplies much faster than the means of life, conflict more than co-operation distinguishes the state of nature. All the hordes occupying the same country cannot consume the same cattle, shelter in the same huts, or deck themselves with the

same ornaments. What one has the other cannot have. Sympathy, again, is but the feeling of a common nature. But until men become conscious, they do not become aware of their true nature; they do not know what they have in common. They see that they have something in common with those of their own family or their own tribe, perhaps with those of their own language or their own traditions: beyond this they are not yet able to go.

In a fully conscious and rational society the animal life would have been absorbed and assimilated by a human life. There are as many ways of describing this human life as there have been sects in philosophy and religion. But everybody is agreed that all men are capable of it, and are bound to seek after it; that men secure it for themselves by securing it for others; that in it every man's perfection is an object to all his fellows, as their perfection is an object to him. No man acts invariably upon this maxim. Most men violate it every day of their lives; but they confess its power. They feel its rebuke. It penetrates into their laws and institutions. Its final acceptance would render conflict obsolete and absurd, co-operation co-extensive with life. For men would live so much in one another that the pain or dishonour of one would be the pain and dishonour of all. Where all had one object, all would unite. Where all were aiding, all would wish one another well.

The ideal in every form tends to unite men. Even when it raises discord it is still a principle of union. Religious warfare is hateful; but it is the opposite of the struggle for existence. Men make war upon each other for a dogma, because the beliefs of any one set of men are so interesting to all others, because they hunger after sympathy and can-



not live without unity. It is true that the sympathy and the unity which content the barbarian do not content his civilized posterity. They are more, not less exacting ; they persecute less, but they proselytize more.

And as men's desire to communicate truth is proportioned to the value they set upon it, so is their joy in professing truth proportioned to the number of those who profess it with them. A single believer may hold fast to his creed ; but he will have very little joy in it. Indeed almost all our pleasure in our ideas is a reflected pleasure. If we are happy in them, although they do not prevail now, it is because we believe that they will prevail hereafter.

Any one who felt sure that he was possessed of precious truths, and that these truths could never find acceptance, would be a very miserable man. For only men who are sceptical to the core can find a real and solid satisfaction in the boundless diversity of opinions. Such diversity a sincere believer may accept as the necessary result of our imperfect vision ; but it is in acknowledging his unity with other believers that he finds strength and joy. All who find their energies renewed and their perseverance confirmed by meeting for purposes of religious worship or political agitation, all these bear witness to the pleasure men have in making a public profession of faith. Symbols, formularies, creeds ; all are expedients of a like nature. All show how indispensable and how attractive to men in their spiritual life is any rallying-point. So long as sects and parties exist upon the earth, so long we have a testimony to the force of spiritual attraction.

The sense of æsthetic or of scientific communion is less widely spread, but is certainly not less genuine. The solitary thinker and the solitary artist are as incomplete and unhappy as the solitary saint. The exponents of a new scientific theory, the founders of a new school of art, are inspired by an apostolic spirit akin to that which animates the teachers of a new faith. In all three instances the more diffused spiritual satisfaction is the more intense spiritual satisfaction. Thus in the spiritual life we lose sight of all distinctions between mine and thine. What one man has every man has. He is rich not only in virtue of that which he can keep to himself, but much more in virtue of that which he shares with others. There is no competition, since there is nothing to compete for. But there must be co-operation, since with our best united efforts we can scarcely make any way worth considering.

All men have, in the first place, one common function, to live : and, in the second place, a variety of special functions subservient thereto. The real progress which men have made is to be judged solely by their success in fulfilling their common function. But they are ever prone to lose sight of this common function, apart from which their special functions have no meaning whatever. For to be absorbed in a merely industrial function is to resign one's humanity. A healthy, handsome savage is immeasurably the superior of a deformed and diseased spinner, however skilful, who lives only in spinning. And as it is by subdividing industrial functions and by making men diligent, each in his own function, that industrial competition furthers progress, we may see how little for any true progress industrial

competition can do. It can hardly carry men any way towards perfection. It has been known to carry them a long way in the opposite direction. It is, indeed, a necessary discipline for all but very strong characters. But it is not a discipline which can form pure or generous minds, develop anything beautiful, or in any respect ennoble social life.

The spirit of industrial competition we are to regard as an unruly natural force, useful only when enslaved to intelligence. Even for the higher special functions, such as literature and art, it supplies nothing like an adequate motive. And for the supreme function of living, it supplies no motive at all. Much confusion of thought would be saved by remembering that the spirit of competition is simply the love of money, and competition the struggle to make money. So that the life of free competition is neither more nor less than a life of subjection to very gross instincts; instincts which grow upon their slave much faster than he can satisfy them; instincts whose unqualified dominion is fatal to everything good or generous, or lovely, or spiritual in man.

So distinct is spiritual progress from physical evolution, that those who do most to further the one are often crushed by the other. It is thus with nations. The Greek states were politically enfeebled by the diversion of the Greek intelligence to literature, art, and philosophy. Whilst Italian scholars, painters, and poets were renewing European culture, the Italian republics were writhing under the barbarian conqueror's heel. The Jews as a nation of prophets were much less prosperous than the Jews as a nation of stock-brokers. And it is thus with individuals. A saint

spends in communing with God the hours which other men spend on Change. A lover of his kind spends life and energy and money in the effort to extinguish a great abuse, or to civilize his more miserable fellow-creatures. A man of science devotes himself to the discovery of new truth, rather than to the application of truth already known, and earns hundreds where he might have earned thousands of pounds. An artist amid neglect not unmingled with derision remains faithful to his own sense of beauty, and multiplies pictures or poems which hardly find a market in his generation. Men of this stamp are assuredly rare, but they are the heroes of human progress. Yet they are disastrously beaten in the race of life. That perfection is the only object of wise desire is not more certain than that perfection does not pay. How crude and childish, then, a theory which derives every advance towards perfection from industrial conflict! How poor an explanation of progress is that which would infer the captains of progress to be weaklings and fools!

The moral ideal is indeed remote from anything existing on our earth. But, although nowhere fulfilled, it is not therefore weak. It is the greatest of the powers which make for real progress. Our civilization is the result not only of appetite, but also of asceticism; not only of self-assertion, but also of self-abnegation; not only of the instinctive desire to live, but also of the reasoned contempt of life; not only of the impulse to crush those who stand in our way, clash with us in our pursuits, and hinder us of our profit or pleasure, but also of the longing to lift up those that are fallen, to soothe pain, to assuage grief, to heal remorse, to give light to the blind, health to the sick,

and consolation to those who are oppressed and have none to comfort them. But for these benign influences mankind would long ago have flung off the too-galling load of existence. These make the true social bond ; and these are not natural. There is nothing like them in the evolution which has produced the infinite variety of animal and vegetable life.

Inasmuch as social life, ceasing to be a life of mere competition, becomes by degrees a life of mutual helpfulness ; inasmuch as men gradually awaken to the change which has taken place in their circumstances and in their own minds, to their own new ideas of happiness and nobleness ; inasmuch as they come to love and revere the society which gave them birth, and to find in its opinions and beliefs, its laws and customs, less a mere network of restraints than the embodiment of their own thoughts ; inasmuch as this society is not only an industrial association, but in some sort a spiritual communion,—it follows that we must discard many current theories as to the relation subsisting between civil society and its members. That relation cannot be adequately expressed in terms drawn from physical science. The individual is no longer a mere fraction of the society ; he is its epitome. His happiness is social, not merely secured by society. A more or less disinterested patriotism has become possible to him.

Patriotism is to be regarded, not as a generous folly, but as the highest wisdom. Patriotism is to be justified, not upon any calculation of averages which tends to show that where the citizens are ready to serve their country they are usually better housed, better clothed, and better fed than

in countries where no citizen cares for anything which lies beyond his own threshold. Patriotism is to be justified on the ground that it is the vocation of every freeman, and that men are happy in their vocation. Who would think of exhorting a poet to write on the ground that making verses tends to calm the mind and facilitate digestion, or even on the ground of the mild titillation which various prosy persons might derive from reading that which he had written? The poet writes because it is his mission to write, and writing is a necessity to him. The brave man serves his country for the same reason. Love is something more than the will to render certain good offices which can be enumerated and valued upon paper. It is life, and like life need not be justified and cannot be measured.

And again, since progress is not merely economic progress, the action of society is not to be regulated by economic principles solely. Progress means simply progress in human perfection; and to this progress all progress in the division of labour, or in the rate of production, is altogether subsidiary. Even were it always true that for the creation of wealth society can do no more than protect the individual in his industry, this truth would throw very little light upon political science. Whatever may be the intelligence of the individual, he usually has the most sincere desire to be well off; and in so far as singleness of aim and earnest aspiration can go, he is better fitted than any other man to choose the shortest and easiest path to his own opulence. But as to his own perfection, that is quite another matter. The great majority of men never stop to consider how far they are perfect or imperfect; and there are very few men indeed whose

own ignorance or weakness has given them one hour of serious or fruitful regret. Even with the best intentions, an average man has but a very limited power of forming intellectual or moral standards for himself; and even if he could form them, he is usually ill-provided with material means of living up to them. To society, therefore, he must be indebted for the right standard, for an adequate impulse, and instruments of improvement. And wherever society in its unconscious operation fails to supply these, they must be supplied by society acting consciously and upon plan, in other words by the state.

Thus the function of the state is education in the largest sense. As Aristotle said so many hundred years ago, civil society has its origin in the impulse to live, but finds its continuance in the impulse to live well. Nature within and without us for ever strives to take her own course; and we have to master her as best we can. We can do so only by opposing to her prodigious resources the organized force of our collective intelligence and will. These, when organized, constitute the state. The state, then, is not a passive spectator of progress. It is not superseded by progress. On the contrary, progress multiplies its burthens, for the ideal recedes much faster than the actual advances. And every advance which men make entangles them in fresh perplexities. Every great gain is accompanied by losses almost as great. Every new truth has its retinue of errors; every new virtue seems to dilute character. As with our bodies so with our souls; our growth is a perpetual wasting, and our very life is on the other side death. So that the centuries as they pass leave the individual always less and less self-sufficing than he was before.

Thus it may well be asked how we can reconcile the progress of society as a spiritual communion with the progress of society as a natural organism. In the natural evolution of society every function is specialized. Every industry is perfected by the division of labour. Does not the division of labour imply the cramping of each individual life, an exhausting strain upon some faculties, a deadening atrophy of all the rest? Does it not seem as though the law of specific functions sacrificed each man's perfection of body and mind to the refinement of mechanic art. And if the conditions of life become more and more unfavourable to great characters, if the members of society gradually become stunted and misshapen, what hope can we cherish for the lasting progress of society itself? A community altogether made up of men skilful in nothing but the repetition of some paltry operation might for many years continue to grow in numbers and in wealth; but it could hardly grow in anything else; and even in numbers and in wealth it would cease to grow when the parcelling out of functions had degraded its citizens below a certain limit of debasement.

Such a prospect as this might well alarm those who could conceive no industrial organization other than that which prevailed in the early part of this century. But now that we have had time to breathe from the passions inflamed by boundless possibilities of gathering riches, we begin to see that men may make their riches serve human wants. We begin to see that subdivision of labour may be made to further the very good which it threatened to destroy. For without subdivision of labour we cannot have industrial efficiency, and without industrial



efficiency we cannot have wealth. But wealth is the condition of leisure, and leisure affords the opportunity of culture. When I speak of leisure, I do not refer merely to the handful of people who have all their time at their own disposal. Beside these, the producers of wealth find that industrial development shortens their hours of labour. The labour of women and children is in many industries restricted, in some prohibited. Holidays are more numerous than of old. Something has been done towards securing the labourer's development; but all that has been done is a very small part of that which our wealth makes possible. If only we grew in wisdom and virtue as we grow in riches, we should be able to dispense, not indeed with hard work, but with such work as crushes and brutalizes its victims, and all men might enjoy leisure and strength of body and mind sufficient for the purposes of a rational self-improvement. We should have conquered by obeying nature.

Two very different tendencies visible in our own time may serve to illustrate the way in which the human longing for a healthy, complete, and joyous existence subdues and utilizes the economic impulse towards specialization. One of these tendencies leads us to value more than ever bodily health, strength, and beauty, to esteem them worthy of a disinterested culture. The other tendency is towards a juster appreciation of art, not only in the form of pictures, poems, and music, but as a pervading social and domestic influence. Men have often followed these tendencies in a blind, irrational temper, altogether losing sight of the end to which they converge, and which alone makes either respectable. The one tendency has produced many brutes, the other ten-

dency many fops. And yet they testify to the elasticity of human nature. Life was becoming hideous and unwholesome. Had we no conscious need of perfection we should have silently dropped those powers and graces which were no longer of economic value. But we had the will, the intelligence, and the wealth to preserve and improve these powers and graces as indispensable to the fulness of life. By the side of special skill in the production of wealth we tried to develop general capacity for its enjoyment.

As every individual comes to be treated more and more as an end in himself, less and less as a means to the profit of others, a steadily increasing number are admitted to the highest functions. The Protestant Reformation made every head of a family a priest; the revolution in the art of war has in many countries made every adult a soldier; the democratic revolution has made most citizens to partake in the government of the state. Each of these functions had in previous times been entrusted to a particular class. Thus the subdivision of labour which applies to the industrial arts does not necessarily apply to all human activities. Another principle, the principle of unity, controls all the higher life of man. All men who have the capacity have the right to partake in the higher life, and the business of society is to augment the number of those who are capable. A liberal education is the process of qualifying a man to be a citizen. A liberal education counteracts the subdivision of labour, in respect of each individual by developing all his faculties, and in respect of the entire community by giving to all its members one culture, one standard of action, one ideal of truth and beauty.

In this way society may enjoy a growing spiritual unity along with a growing subdivision of labour. The wealth which we accumulate by becoming pieces in the great industrial machine we may spend in making ourselves accomplished men and women. Whilst each citizen earns his livelihood by concentrating his faculties upon a narrower and yet narrower span of technical work, he may employ his leisure in gaining broader and yet broader views of life and nature; he may see more clearly than did his forefathers in a simple age the meaning and the interest of his place in our complex society; he may avail himself of multiplied opportunities for study, for travel, for artistic or athletic recreation, and may attain to a character not only subtle and intricate, but also strong and symmetrical.

Somebody will say that in theory all this may be very fine, but that social life does in fact stunt some powers and desires in order to stimulate others into a monstrous and unhealthy growth. Admitting the truth of this complaint, we should blame, not society, but the disorganization of society. The complaint holds good of all classes in a disorganized society, or rather in a society organized only for the purpose of making wealth; and it holds good especially of the poor now huddled together in huge confused masses, which cannot be called social. But it least applies to those classes which have a social life of their own, to members of the liberal professions, to artists, men of letters, or men of science.

In so far as we think about our lives we can improve them. If we will not improve, the fault is our own. If we persist in acting upon the principle that riches must increase faster than

population, if we take no pains to regulate the distribution of wealth, if we squander our money upon all sorts of unwholesome or useless luxuries, if we scamp our work, and shirk our political duties, then indeed we become the slaves of our industrial conditions, and must live in order to produce. But in this case we have chosen to die rather than to live. Such a choice means death, not to us only, but to our society as well; for society lives in the individual, and develops by the individual. Culture in the best sense is the object of all association. When the culture of a community ceases to grow, the community has not long to live; for there is no such thing as a progress in which the individual withers while the world is more and more. The world and the individual must wither or must grow together.

We inherit nearly everything which lifts us above the animals. We inherit, but not the inheritance of aliens. All that we possess in social and civilized life had its birth in minds like our own. Even when we adopt blindly, without question or criticism, that which is given to us, it is as when we adopt the unconscious working of our own minds. We do not explain this process by calling it a development. To the public development suggests a series of changes following each other in unaccountable succession; to the student of physical science it suggests a series of changes, connected indeed by an intelligible law, but not realized by the individual subjects of change; to the student of civilization it suggests a series of changes not only intelligible to him, but the work of an intelligence akin to his own, an intelligence constantly opening to wider and richer knowledge, an intelligence

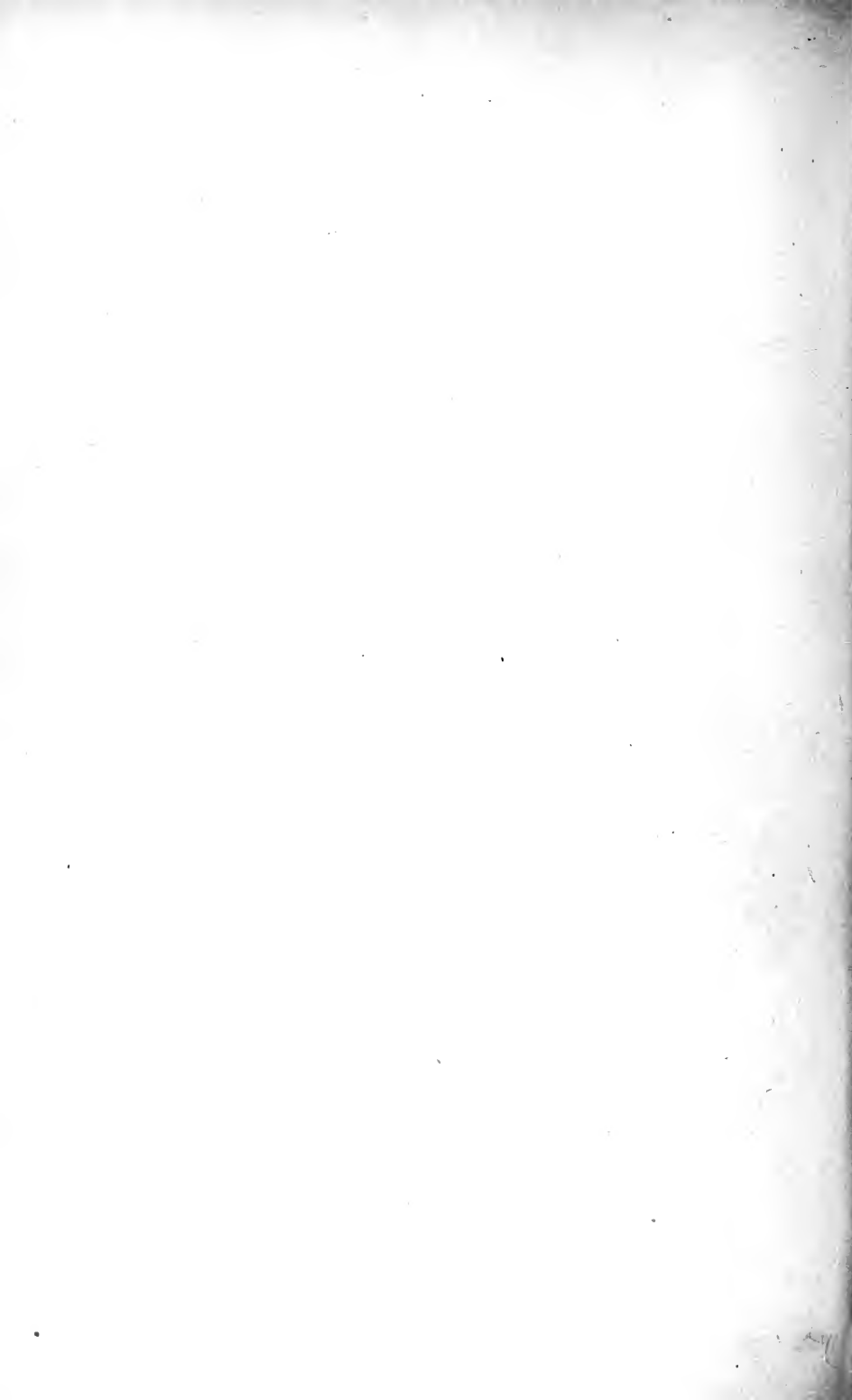
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becoming more and more its own master, an intelligence which finds in the immovable order of the universe its own truest and happiest fulfilment. Such a development is progress, and the record of such a development is history.



v.

*INDIVIDUALITY.*





## V.

### *INDIVIDUALITY.*

THUS far we have been employed in examining current ideas of progress, and of the influence exerted by progress upon each member of a progressive society. We must now ask what individuality means. Is individuality a good thing, and if so, why? Under what conditions is it most likely to be plentiful? Does civilization kill out individuality? Does modern European civilization kill out individuality? Or does the best civilization nurture the strongest individual? Is it only an arrested or a decaying civilization in which great individuals cannot be found? All these are questions which we must try to answer, for the common civilization is precisely that which every citizen receives from his community. His community imparts it in many ways, but above all by means of law and of public opinion. To what extent and by what means should it attempt to civilize him? In other words, how far and by what means should society limit the freedom of the individual? We cannot solve this problem without trying to attain some clear and distinct notion of individuality.

Like most words which are in constant and popular use, individuality is a term of somewhat vague signification. It generally implies strength, originality, character. It also

implies peculiarities by which strength, originality, and character make their presence known. These men value, not for themselves, but as proofs of a sturdy nature. The sturdy nature they value for itself, they value as all important; and they are quite right in doing so. If natural force be neither wisdom nor virtue, still it is the only raw material out of which these can be made. There is no occasion to waste words in proving that a process of manufacture which destroys the stuff whilst working it up, is an absurd and mischievous process. If civilization tends to mar character, to unnerve will, to lower the standard of greatness, then most assuredly civilization is pernicious and hateful. If progress be after all progress in weakness and littleness, it is merely a progress in disease and death. In this case civilization is something to be extirpated, and progress something to be arrested.

Ultimately there is for man no good except his own greatness. Pleasures and refinements, inventions and discoveries, are to the impoverished and exhausted nature, useless. With all our science there remains so much mystery, in spite of all our comfort we have to endure so much pain, that we can find peace and rest, if anywhere, only in our own power to act and endure. But before we confess that our most earnest endeavours must needs carry us farther and farther from our truest good, let us see if there be no other conclusion possible. Perhaps those who set progress against individuality speak hastily and unworthily, meaning by progress nothing more than the extension of the franchise or the multiplication of persons just able to read and write; and by individuality something not inward and essential, but outward and accidental.

Individuality is not eccentricity. The individual is the

man who joins unity of character with a full and harmonious development of talent. The eccentric is the man who tries to make it clear to all men that he is unlike everybody else. A true individual may have some of the weakness of an eccentric; or he may be distinguished from others by the fact that he is full-grown, whilst they are stunted. But he is not anxious to parade his individuality; his individuality may never come to the surface. If he be a great individual, his pity for the multitude will raise him above the desire of astonishing or provoking it. On the other hand, the eccentric lives in his eccentricity; he would be miserable if the neighbours ceased to talk of him, to wonder at him, to be shocked by him. Of all men he is the most a parasite. Thus where there are most eccentrics there are fewest individuals. For the impulse which leads men to be eccentric, leads them also to be fashionable; vanity is in both cases the motive, and a man's vanity is the surest measure of his weakness.

Between inward unity and outward oddity there is no inevitable connection. A perfect unity belongs to anything which is perfectly fitted to serve one purpose or to lead one life. If there were a thousand similar things of this sort, every one of them would have a perfect unity, every one of them would be a true individual. Again, there might very well be a thousand things, every one designed to serve the same use, or to lead the same life, and every one constructed in a manner peculiar to itself, yet all unfitted to fulfil their proper end. Each of these would be an individual in the sense that it did not closely resemble anything else of the same kind, but it would not have any inward unity, for it would not be

nicely fitted to answer any single purpose. It would not be a true individual: something truly indivisible.

Thus all would admit that the higher animals are more truly individual than the lower; a tiger is more an individual than a sea-anemone. His structure and his life are each more subtly elaborated, so that every part of the one, every event of the other has a closer dependence upon all the rest, and needs for its interpretation a more constant reference to the whole; yet in size, in colour, and in many other particulars tigers vary less among themselves than do sea-anemones. The type of organization in becoming more complex has also become more stable. Ascending in the scale of life we find a narrower range of variety; such individuality as can be found among animals combines in an inverse proportion the two elements which individuality is commonly used to signify.

Let us pass from beings below to beings above man. We can imagine no differences between perfect beings. Beings that are under no limitation must needs all be alike; we may push this farther, and say that of such beings there can be only one. Indeed, the religious history of mankind proves that all ages and nations capable of forming the idea of such a being have held that only one such being could exist, and common sense leads to the same conclusion; for if there were two or more perfect beings, each must in some way exclude all the rest; each would be finite, and thus each would be imperfect. Or if this be a doubtful and metaphysical proposition, at least these perfect natures must be related in modes surpassing our conception, and their distinguishing peculiarities can nowise resemble those which distinguish one man from another. ✓

We find something in human individuality similar to that which we found in the individuality of animals and of gods. If we ask for the most marked individuals of any age or country, we should certainly be referred to its greatest men. These then are the true individuals; yet great men are the very men who have most in common with one another and with their inferiors. In the first place, they are generally educated men, they have a common stock of methods and ideas. In the second place, they are men of wide and delicate sympathy; they have the gift for entering into the lives, for interpreting the thoughts and actions of other men; and this gift no man can have who has not much in common with his kind. In the third place, they are men who understand what their age requires, and how to provide it; they above all other men have aims common to one another, and common also, although it be unwittingly, to all their contemporaries.

Along with all this which they share with their fellows, men of genius have no doubt something which makes it all their own, something quite incommensurable and incommunicable. But if they have much which is peculiar, they have also much which is public property. And the two elements in their life and character do not exist side by side. These elements are reciprocally cause and effect. Few men have been so truly individual as the greatest of all poets. Yet Shakespeare was so universal that from all his writings all the commentators have not been able to wring one indisputable personal fact. Thus individuality and universality are only two aspects of the same thing. And popular sentiment confesses as much. Of men endowed with great genius we say that they live and die alone; but we also say that such men are most truly human. At all times men of genius have found

sympathy to be the one thing without which they could not be happy and which they could not get.

What is the distinctive quality which makes an eminent moral individual? Is it a quality of self-assertion? Or a quality of self-abnegation? Or is it really a blending of the two? How far is it developed by freedom, and how far by discipline? Does it owe more to tradition or to scepticism? Does it flourish most amid immovable surroundings, or amid surroundings which vary their aspect every hour? In talking about men of extraordinary moral character we every moment assume this or that answer to one or more of these questions. Every one has his own notions respecting the appearance of such individuals. But what it is which makes them what they are, is hard, if not impossible to tell.

In our time we have seen so many revolutions, political and religious; we have cared so little about any and have talked so much about all; we have so debauched our minds with the endless Baratarian feast of controversy afforded by reviews and magazines; we have so blended intellectual restlessness with intellectual indolence; we have wrought ourselves into such a feverish dulness, into such a polemic indifference; that we are apt to mistake our own spiritual nightmare for the normal spiritual life and to think that men who do not for ever canvass and question their first principles of action must be very poor creatures indeed. We rather incline to conjecture that there is no certainty, no continuity in anything which we still remit to human thought or will. Morals, we say, have ever been a subject of the greatest uncertainty. Only in these enlightened times have men made any serious effort to place them upon a rational

footing. But every now and then ingenious persons have struck out rules of life altogether original; and have had the resolution to suffer anything rather than acknowledge the vanity of that which they had invented. Such have been the great moral teachers of mankind.

But the great moral teachers have seldom yet been great discoverers. They have seldom announced new principles of action. They have seldom brought to light any new reason for doing what we ought to do. They have seldom told us to do anything which we did not already know to be right. That which distinguished them from all other men, which gave them an incomparable power, which made them memorable individuals, was the fervour with which they appropriated, the insight with which they applied the rule of life acknowledged by all, and by almost all disobeyed. They spoke as men having authority, and not as the scribes. They lived as if they really believed what they said. Their inspiration was their own; but everything else they inherited. It was this for which they were so deeply loved and hated. Their first premises were accepted by everybody, and their conclusions were as delightful to the disciple ambitious of perfection as outrageous to the sensible person who wanted to get on. For they forced the world to think; they would not let anybody rest in contradiction; they would not allow him to pray twice a day for the coming of that kingdom of God which he hindered throughout the rest of his waking hours. But in thus bringing life to the test of conscience, they were moral conservatives; they continued, they did not break off the work of their nation and their kind. By the help of its own ideal they have recast society. They were able to accomplish this because

they were free from the prejudices, the preoccupations, the usage, the traditions, the personal interests which, for most men, wither up that ideal into a formula. They shattered the formula for the sake of that which the formula expressed.

Much ingenuity has been spent in proving and in refuting the assertion that the Christian ethics really contain nothing new; that the rule of doing to others as you would have them do to you had been already given by Greek philosophers or Eastern saints. Whether or no the rule was original is of merely historical consequence. What is of practical consequence is that the life and words of Christ have helped many men to obey the rule better than men did before Christ lived and spoke. In a later age Luther introduced no new moral law, but put to the proof of an accepted law the conduct of those who professed themselves its teachers. The revolution which began in the last century, has filled our own and promises to extend through many more, endeavours to apply on a great scale moral ideas acknowledged, not merely by Christians and Europeans, but by all civilized men. In one word, all primary moral truths are platitudes and have been such for many centuries.

Moralists who make entirely new discoveries in morals, reformers who enact rules altogether new, are either fools or charlatans or noble young men in the first heat of inconsiderate enthusiasm. If Shelley is now regarded as more than half a saint, it is not because of his fantastic theories about love and marriage; but because he tried to fulfil a law of immemorial sanctity; because, like Homer's hero, he was a friend to all men; because, conformably to the Gospel teaching, he



took no thought for the morrow. Shelley's mistakes were the mistakes of a boy. But mature men who try to eliminate from human nature any of its primary feelings, or from social life any one of its fundamental institutions, are less pardonable. Generally they pass away without effecting anything. Sometimes they have made anarchy supreme for a few moments. But anarchy is the only thing which cannot last. It disappears as soon as it has swallowed up its own authors. It disappears after dishonouring the most salutary revolutions, after discrediting the most upright friends of progress. And this discredit, this dishonour, are the only lasting fruits of a brilliant originality in ethics.

An old principle is transformed by a new application. In politics and in morals, especially, to apply what you know is the only way of learning more. In this sense the great reformer is a great innovator. But he innovates with a certain reluctance. For he feels most deeply our common nature; he holds most staunchly by our common experience. He finds innovation, not a pleasure, but a necessity. He innovates upon a great scale because he would attain a great end. He would not for a little matter harass his fellow-men. Neither would he harass them by useless half-measures. He submits to go to the full extent of change demanded by circumstances, but he is resolute against going any farther. And thus the true moral individual is both energetic and ascetic. He at once asserts and denies himself. He seems to be eccentric, because he acts on principles admitted by all. He seems self-willed, because no whim diverts him from obeying the general conscience.

Again, what is it that makes a great individual in science? As regards science, not only the practice but also the theory

of most men is foolishness. Beyond the vague feeling that there prevails some order in nature, and the vague confidence that of this order something can be known, our race has no common scientific inheritance. But in science, as in morals, the great individual is not the man who gives himself up to his peculiar fancies. The student of science has to free himself from all the prepossessions arising from familiar habits of thought. He must learn to question every prejudice. He must become perfectly open and perfectly flexible in mind. He must attain to the point of view, he must acquire the method, he must devote himself to the objects which are really scientific. To do all this is not easy. It is not agreeable. Men were very slow to discover and very reluctant to confess that the way of studying nature which first occurred to them was not the best way. When we compare the scientific men of the Middle Age with the scientific men of our own time, we are apt to say that the scientific intelligence was once enslaved and is now free. And there is no harm in saying so. But we must not forget that the old slavery was natural and that the new freedom has been purchased by obedience.

In the sphere of science the attempt to liberate our intelligence corresponds to the attempt to liberate our wills in the sphere of action. In either case we obtain freedom only through an arduous discipline. The freedom which we desire is not freedom to do whatever we like, nor freedom to think as we like; but rather freedom from instinct, freedom from our thoughtless natural propensities. This freedom is not freedom to be eccentric. Nor can it be acquired by giving the rein to our eccentricities. Eccentricity is the very thing from which we would be free; what

we above all things desire is to be at the centre. We feel sure that if we can possess ourselves of the right spirit and the right method we shall be individual enough. And as in the moral, so in the scientific sphere we develop by denying ourselves. Self-abnegation becomes the inseparable counterpart of energy.

So also is it in art. A great individual in art will be a great artist, and a great artist is an artist who produces beautiful things. In what way does an artist produce his most beautiful work? Certainly not by yielding to the temptation of great wealth or immediate applause. He must disregard his public if he is to raise them. He must pay no attention to their whimsies. But neither must he consider his own. He has to work himself free of his own weakness, his own affectation, his own caprice, his own numberless odd tricks. He has to sacrifice those effects which are most delightful to his own immature judgment. He has to remember Dr. Johnson's precept, to strike out everything which appears to him particularly fine. Very few artists are able to do all this. Even the great artist often retains a mannerism, a trick of style, which his admirers reproduce, which is the capital of his admirers. But in the greatest we can no longer detect the trick, the mannerism; we find no individuality except the rarest individuality of all, the individuality of perfection.

In order to make their works possible what a travail have they and their race undergone! By a long process of doing what they did not themselves like, they end in producing that which everybody likes. In the creative mind a vague ideal has been struggling with a thousand other forces; not only with the love of ease, or gain, or popularity, but with the

desire to do things which cannot well be done in the material appropriate to that particular art, or to do things which are beyond the sphere of any art whatsoever. The historian wishes to be as vivid as the painter; the painter would fain be as suggestive as the musician; the sculptor would like his works to be dramatic as well as statuesque; or perhaps historian, painter, and sculptor all wish not only to render with truth their object, but in the rendering to convey some doctrine of theology, morality, or political economy. Most men yield to these impulses and create something which pleases a season or a class. The few deny themselves this freedom and are true artists. But in trying simply to express the beautiful, in producing that which will satisfy the taste of all cultivated persons in proportion as they are cultivated, the artist has done in his own walk the very same thing which the scholar and the saint have done in their own; he has renounced all personal gratification, he has abjured all personal ends in order to possess himself of something eternal, infinite, and true.

To be a genuine individual means, therefore, to have a talent, to have trained it without stint of time or trouble; to exercise it simply for its own sake, suppressing everything which might run counter to its free expansion. A genuine individual is the man who never cares a straw about being like or unlike to other men; who never indulges his own laziness, his own longing for change, his own cowardice, or his own impatience; who can harden himself to do and suffer great things. He may not be what the vulgar call a moral man. He may have gross vices. He may be rough, overbearing, and thoroughly unamiable. But he is a man who makes his own life instead of allowing circumstance and

passion to make it for him. His energy carries him out of the animal life. And thus far he is in the true sense of the word moral, self-denying, and austere.

In what classes do we find individuality strongest and most plentiful? Is there not most individuality among the most highly educated? I doubt not that many will challenge their individuality. Hitherto the uneducated have been so much more numerous than the educated, every uneducated genius has excited so much astonishment, and so many educated persons have received a meagre mechanical education, that there exists a prejudice in favour of talent run wild, and a scepticism as to the effect of training talent.

But in an age of compulsory education we may assume that education is a good thing. We may suppose that the best educated man is most likely to be a real individual.

The educated man is the creature of his society. He has been moulded by its influences, has imbibed its ideas, and is controlled by its opinion. Unable to recall the true image of his unalloyed, unadulterated self, he is for ever deprived of the hope of casting away the habits and the prejudices engrained by his early teachers. His individuality has been enslaved before his very birth. He has not created the culture which he receives. He does not elect whether or no he will receive it. His belief in certain truths, his observance of certain rules is as constant and almost as unconscious as any natural function. Many things there are which he cannot help doing; many which he could not possibly do. A refined man cannot be brutal even if he wished it. Worse still, an educated man can think only in certain ways. However hard it may struggle, a scientific mind can seldom be wholly absurd. And what is the result? Is it among the educated

or among the uneducated that we find the fullest expansion and the richest variety of character? Is it among the educated or among the uneducated that we find men most sensible, how much yet remains to do and to learn? Surely as the prosperous man is the most discontented, so the enlightened man is the most aspiring. And observation daily shows that of all vices a pert self-confidence or a greasy self-satisfaction are the least likely to attach to an educated man. No humility is so profound or so sincere as the humility of the artist, the scholar, or the saint. If these are truly what they profess to be, they need no outward inducement to improve. Without improvement life would have no relish for them. On the other hand, those who have no life worth living are best content with life as it is. Those who have tried to civilize the most ignorant and vicious of mankind have been repeatedly baffled by their sottish indifference. Prejudice, convention, and fashion, although they may wear another garb, although they may speak another dialect, are as lusty in squalid villages and crowded courts as in rectories and manor houses and the luxurious quarters of great cities.

It is just because the educated are more likely to have a high standard of what men ought to be, that they are more likely to have a rational and genial tolerance for men as they are. Intolerance comes seldomer of earnestness than of self-conceit. The educated, it is true, may not be tolerant of ignorance, of vice, or of the misery which these produce. Of these, as of everything ugly and chaotic, the educated man will be intolerant in the degree of his education. The educated man is quite right in detesting these. Mankind at large do not enough detest these or many other things.

But the educated man is not intolerant of any class or denomination. He sees that within the very wide limits marked out by common-sense, men may go right in many various ways. He feels that most of the differences which divide honest men are too petty and childish for anger or indignation, and he is quite ready to see good in something new or unusual, to appreciate characters unlike his own, to enjoy the multiplicity of life, and to hear everybody's opinion. And in so far as toleration is requisite for the growth of individuality, toleration must be secured, not by laying down an abstract rule of non-interference, but by the temperance of an enlightened public. The essential matter is to be tolerant and intolerant of the right things respectively. It is this state of mind, and neither a general bigotry nor a general indifference, which fosters individuality and stimulates progress.

Those who love to enforce the antithesis between culture and originality delight to dwell upon the religious, moral, and political reformations so often opposed by the educated and carried out by the ignorant. But we may observe that those who have received the most fashionable education are not always the best educated. Moreover, the highest education has always been expensive, and therefore the peculiar privilege of a class. The educated have often taken the wrong side, not so much because of their culture as on account of prejudices which would not let them profit by it. Lastly, besides the education given in schools and colleges there is the education of life. Suffering may save the ill-educated from accepting the fallacies which many enlightened persons find so pleasant and profitable. But because the unlearned take the right side in political

controversies in which right happens to coincide with their interests, are they therefore more likely than anybody else to take the right side in all political debates whatsoever? Although privilege has hardened the hearts and sealed the eyes of many cultivated men, yet the ignorant and untrained could have done nothing, could not even have overthrown privilege, but for the counsel and command of chiefs drawn from the ranks of their oppressors. Indeed, the paradox based on the errors of the educated would never find an intelligent person to utter it with even the semblance of gravity had it not proved a useful, although double-edged instrument, in the hands of those who desire to substitute one intellectual discipline for another. Except when we are engaged in some enterprise of this kind, we do not narrow the term education to express a merely logical training, nor do we imagine that any peculiar logical training exerts an unqualified sway over life.

I think that many at the present day expect from education effects which it cannot produce. They are apt to assume that a nation is happy in proportion as it is enlightened. Yet the intelligent are usually less contented than the ignorant. Why should we expect to find contentment in an educated nation. Culture in former ages was for the rich and powerful alone; and it helped them to a more human enjoyment of their good fortune. But culture can only add another pang to the pain of poverty and humiliation. Besides culture implies a more constant thoughtfulness and a more alert sympathy. But life is pleasant because we do not think, and tolerable because we do not feel. It seems to me, therefore, that the worthy people who hope to make everybody happy by means of education are altogether mistaken.



Whether or no education will make any man more or less happy is an affair of temperament and circumstance. Probably it will make him more unhappy than he was before; but in making him unhappy it will also make him strong to do without happiness. It will bring out any natural faculty which he may possess; it will awaken his imagination, enlarge his feeling, sharpen his logic, fill him with ideas, hopes, and ambitions; in short, transform him from an animal to an individual. That education fosters individuality we need not doubt. But in order to do this, it must become something more than the art of teaching young people to pretend a knowledge of things concerning which they are profoundly ignorant.

In what societies and at what epochs have the noblest men achieved most? It is a common observation that small, well-knit states have done the best service to mankind. And the reason of this appears to be that their narrow limits favour a more thorough political unity and a more developed social organization. Far from destroying freedom, this unity and this organization alone make freedom possible. The little republics of ancient Greece and modern Italy were free indeed, but not especially tolerant of personal caprice or self-indulgence. Not one of these states could have existed for a single lifetime without the sternest subordination of the individual to the community. So long as they continued to flourish in their meridian splendour, their governments never hesitated to demand, their citizens never hesitated to make such sacrifices of private ease and freedom as could not be enforced, as might not even be proposed in any democratic state of modern times. Circumstances made this self-devotion indispensable; but it is not therefore the less

instructive. In those famous communities the individual was expected to do and to suffer much for the public ; and the strength of the individual grew with the growing exorbitance of the requirements which he had to meet.

Great nations, again, have done their greatest work under the stress of some intense emotion, gathering all citizens into the closest unity. Sometimes a struggle for existence ; sometimes the effort to secure political freedom or to defend religious truth lately won ; sometimes the discovery of a new world of art and science ; in short, everything which exalts public spirit, multiplies illustrious men. Rare, indeed, and brief are those moments of national life in which overpowering necessity constrains every man to forget his miserable private concerns ; in which a high inspiration swells his soul with large thoughts and generous passions. Yet such moments have given to Greece, to Italy, and to England, their noblest men and their noblest achievements. And when we lay aside our dull mechanical way of computing happiness, then we find that the heroic ages are also the happy ages. In judging of felicity, sympathy helps us quite as much as statistics, and poetry is no less useful than blue-books. Compare the literature of Greece at the epoch of the Persian wars with the literature of Greece under the Cæsars ; or the literature of England contending for very life against Spain with the literature of rich and pacific England in the nineteenth century ; and then say in which epoch the finest minds of Greece or of England were most healthy and most happy. The more each citizen can merge his life in the life of his people, the more will be his felicity as well as his strength.

It should seem, therefore, that a man is individual in

proportion as he is social. What he has of his own is measured by that which he has in common with others. This common stock is not to be confused with the fashionable passions and prejudices of the day. It is made up of all the wisdom and goodness, of all the knowledge and skill of our race. This the individual must appropriate if he would develop his individuality. And in order to exert that individuality he must feel with his community. For without emotion a finished individuality of thought is but a painted window without sunlight. And whether emotion makes itself felt as a catching enthusiasm for some great public good ; or as disgust and scorn for perverse folly and incorrigible vice ; or as a deep pity for the miserable estate of men ; or as a generous ambition to extend the empire of science, literature, or art ; howsoever it may arise, whatever form it may take, emotion always is and must be social. Thus individual character owes to society alike its discipline and its inspiration. And our chance of being great individuals is exactly proportioned to our power of profiting by this discipline and absorbing this inspiration, to our power of ignoring in ourselves everything that is merely personal and peculiar.

\* We often hear it said that as society grows stronger, the individual grows weaker; and that this will continue until at last all human beings merge in one dismal uniformity, and the whole of human life is congealed into a hopeless rigidity. Outward conditions, it is said, become more and more alike as time goes on. Every political and every social change furthers this assimilation. And if the conditions of life tend to become everywhere the same, men must everywhere come to resemble each other more closely. Since

greatness and goodness are ever in the minority, it follows, that in becoming alike men will become ordinary. The public opinion of a commonplace multitude will be as omnipotent as ignoble. Objects of desire proportioned to the vulgar imagination and rules of life accommodated to the vulgar intelligence will then be rules and objects for everybody. The higher life will no longer find countenance or support; and the higher minds will be cowed and crushed. So that the slender rivulet of ideal wisdom and goodness which has hitherto refreshed the desert of life will finally cease to flow. No longer fed by their secret source, our conventional morality will become an unmeaning usage and our current knowledge a stiff formula. In one word, progress tends slowly but surely to defeat itself. Every expansion of social life finally impoverishes the community by dwarfing the individual. When such a theory finds pretty frequent acceptance it is worthy of serious consideration.

If we compare the civilized world of to-day with the civilized world of the Middle Age or of classical antiquity we can understand, even if we do not share, this apprehension. In those old times there might be more robust individuality; there certainly was more palpable variety. Before Rome had erected her universal empire almost every tribe and every city displayed a peculiar culture and a peculiar type of character. And in the Middle Age every province and every order of men had its own customs, its own organization, its own life; and could express its own individuality in a dialect, in a dress, in arts and amusements peculiar to itself. Nowadays all is outwardly much alike. The differences that remain are to most men subjects, not of pride, but of regret.

No district or profession hedges itself around with tradition or usage. In so far as their means will allow, all men inhabit houses of the same structure, wear clothes of the same cut, seek the same amusements and the same luxuries. All classes enjoy equal civil and aspire to equal political rights; speak much the same language, receive the same elementary education, read the same books, and cherish the same ambitions. Although the vast inequality of fortunes may not diminish, it daily excites more and more discontent, for the rich and the poor daily grow more alike in all essential attributes. Wealth can still command much luxury, a certain political influence, some mean admiration, and a great deal of mean envy; but it no longer implies a special culture or special functions. In short, all appearances favour the belief that men everywhere are coming to be much alike.

But we may follow appearances too far. Perhaps individuality has not ceased to exist, perhaps it has merely shrunk inwards. We are disposed to think that individuality will continue to grow with the growth of real civilization. Beneath the varied and gorgeous pageant of the Middle Age an acute observer might have detected a widespread monotony. Peasant, burgher, and knight differed much more in garb and bearing than in their inner life. Perhaps not one of the three could read; perhaps not one of the three had travelled, save on a pilgrimage to some popular shrine; their minds were imprisoned within the narrow limits of their generation and of their neighbourhood; a haze of ignorance and prejudice veiled from their eyes the immense fulness of their own and the majestic procession of former ages. Modern civilization is so vast as to furnish an

infinite variety of pursuits. Every one of these, if earnestly pursued, will develop a distinct habit of thought and feeling. Such differences are not the less real and indelible because they are very subtle, or because they may never find expression in practical life. A metaphysician, a biologist, a poet, an historian, a politician, and a lawyer differ more profoundly than ignorant men separated by the most impassable barriers of class. Sir Robert Peel, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Westbury, Carlyle, and Darwin were not less strongly marked individuals because they all wore broadcloth and conversed in the dialect of good society.

Indeed, those who complain that everybody has come to be like everybody else are not more earnest or more numerous than those who complain that everybody is narrowed down to a mere specialist. A critic who took pleasure in hair-splitting might interpose and say that men cannot at once be all specialists and all alike. He would not silence the murmurers. They might retort that men are all alike in narrowness and weakness. They might allege that all are alike in being singly very insignificant. But they would have to allow that the monotony of which they complain does not exclude a wonderful variety. If, after all, strong characters or well-developed individuals are less common than we might fairly expect, the reason must lie deeper than is generally supposed. Variety in conditions of life, and still more, variety in subjects and habits of thought, will make men various; but apparently it will not make them individuals. We have already seen that most people use individuality as a name for two distinct things; for that full and healthy development which does

issue in variety and for a variety which may or may not be the symptom of such development. Our age certainly does not lack variety of character ; but perhaps it lacks development of character. And if so, why ? Does the fault lie with civilization in general or with the vices of our particular civilization ?

Our age is not an age remarkable for great characters. Intelligence not genius, decency not heroism, are its most conspicuous attributes. But it should seem that the principal cause of the prevailing mediocrity is to be found in our unconscious materialism. Our age is an age of severe and incessant labour for the attainment of low objects. For it so happens that every one of the great changes of recent years has tended in the first instance to fix the minds of men solely upon material well-being. The political and social revolution has broken down the impassable barriers of rank. Reformers hoped that when this had been done rank would no longer be an object of worship. But for the present at least rank or position is more valued than ever ; and the ambition of rising in the social scale daily animates men to undergo the most fatiguing and disgusting labours. Again, the great mechanical inventions, the extended commerce and the reckless speculation of our time have created the utmost variety of conditions, whilst holding out to everybody the possibility of enormous wealth. And whilst man's prurience for riches and honours has thus been inflamed into a melancholy madness, his spiritual aspirations have been chilled and thwarted by the great intellectual revolution of the age. Historical criticism and physical science have shattered the mythology in which the religion of former times had clothed itself. They have crushed the

husk ; but this could not be done without bruising the kernel. The lukewarm and indifferent, ever the great majority, are pleased to imagine that they can dismiss religion from their minds ; the greedy and the sensual are glad to find that all old-fashioned moral ideas rest on mere fables ; and many of the nobler sort, dispirited by having to forsake all that they held most precious, or inflamed by the desire of extirpating what seems to them a baleful illusion, no longer draw from religion the comfort and support which of old it afforded to such men. Thus from the highest to the lowest men are more strongly tempted to greed and irreligion than at any period since the first centuries of our era. Those centuries, like our own, were centuries of cosmopolitan refinement and individual paltriness. Then as now, it seemed as if everything which most ennobles and transfigures the life of man had for ever departed. But a better time was coming then ; and a better time may be coming now.

A change in the fashion of our outward life has co-operated with the change in our ideas. Living in enormous cities and perpetually shifting our residence we form no ties, we nowhere take root ; we have no dependents and few friends ; nothing that we can really call a society and scarcely anything that we can call a home. Such is the loss of time and trouble and money involved in social intercourse that it has become a luxury for the rich. Other men first learn to do without it ; and then cease to care for it. We lose our relish for the finest and sweetest of human enjoyments ; but we do not thereby become more austere or more self-denying. On the contrary, we try to relieve our lonely and laborious life by accumulating within our own four walls all the delicate luxuries and all the elegant trifles



that can beguile the *ennui* which fills up every interval of leisure. We cherish a decent selfishness and a quiet sensuality. In a word, we resolve to be comfortable at all costs.

De Tocqueville has shown us that comfort is not more innocent, but rather more insidious than luxury. It benumbs the conscience as orthodoxy benumbs the intelligence. We do not feel that there is anything wrong in trying to have as much comfort as possible ; and with less than the greatest possible comfort we do not know how to live. Yet with the growth of comfort, dissatisfaction grows too. The man who desires to be comfortable tries to creep out of a world full of pain into a corner where only pleasure finds room. But no such corner can be found. Unable to live without comfort, unable to get as much comfort as he would like, he wavers between a dull satiety and a pettish discontent. The business of providing for the comfort of a modern English family is so minute, so tedious, and so absorbing, that the modern Englishman has no time to think seriously about anything else. His mind for ever runs upon food, dress, furniture, and house. His happiness is entwined with these, and these are all expensive. With such preoccupations, how few can be high-spirited, generous, or free !

The gifted man who takes his own way should never expect to be rich, for he should not expect men to buy what they do not want. But he may fairly reproach society for not having given him that education which would have strengthened him to do his best without encouragement and without reward. Our modern education, instead of repressing, stimulates all those appetites which make us the

slaves of vulgar opinion. It awakens an insatiable thirst for amusement, for elegance, for luxury. It appeals to no motives of effort save the lowest, emulation, cupidity, vanity, and the desire to get on. It strangles in its competitive routine all disinterested curiosity. It sacrifices to the show of universal knowledge all calm, deliberate, painstaking, and sincere study. It teaches the young that seeming is everything, and being nothing. It trains them to work, and to hate and despise their work. It turns into the world men willing to labour at anything which pays, and unwilling to labour at anything else.

Public opinion receives the victims of education and reinforces the old lessons. For society does not look upon genius as public property. It regards genius as the means of earning certain advantages for its possessor. It says to the man of genius, You have a fair field and no favour; you know the inclinations of an untutored public; and surely your genius is not good for much if it does not help you to tickle their inclinations with eminent pleasure to them and profit to yourself. Write a certain sort of novel; paint a certain class of picture; or, better still, drop this creative humbug and go into a paying profession. All will be well with you. There never yet was an age in which talent found a better market. What more can talent desire than to sell dear? In the name of Heaven why have we not more talent and finer talent now than of old?

The influence of society might be, has at times been, a bracing influence. We know that the communities which have achieved most glory have often been fierce and intolerant or worse. This was the failing annexed to their virtues.

That a man who in good faith proposes to surrender a besieged city should be stoned to death is hard, or, if you will, brutal ; but it shows that the townspeople value something remote and unseen, more than they value their ease, their property, or their lives. A nation strung to the highest pitch of enthusiasm feels about invisible things, about ideas political and religious, as we feel about money and pleasure ; that is to say, its numbers are willing to devote to these their own lives and the lives of others. Where there is much passion, there will be some madness ; where there is a great deal of earnestness, there will be some intolerance. It would certainly be much better if we could have the spirit which willingly suffers, but shrinks from inflicting martyrdom. Yet the fierce spiritual life which breaks out into persecution breeds also the men whom no persecution can tame ; for out of the general eagerness to determine great questions comes the spirit of heroes and martyrs ; and intolerance itself is far less depressing, far less stunting, than indifference. Intolerance is but the zeal of coarse minds ; indifference is mere blank nothing. One is fire, the other vacuum.

John Stuart Mill has expressed in very striking terms the truth that times of weak conviction and decorous hypocrisy are less favourable to unpopular truth than times of fanaticism and persecution. The man of weak faith is always the slave of his senses. Truth old or new is to him a luxury, and one of the luxuries easiest to be foregone. If very strange or very new, it may amuse or excite, but never can possess him. To all spiritual attacks materialism presents a pile of sand-bags, bigotry a wall of granite ; and against artillery granite does not make so sure a bulwark as sand.

Thus the spread of truth in a free country is never proportioned to the advantages which freedom offers. One is apt to think that because truth has triumphed over persecution, therefore truth, no longer assailed by persecution, must spread like an epidemic. But it was persecution which gave to the teachers their spell, to their doctrine its charm, and to the public their curiosity. Men who tolerate difference of opinion because all opinions are much the same to them, men whose only serious interest is practical in the low sense, have always been numerous in society; and in the society of the present day, a society in which every one is as much as possible disengaged from all his fellows, men of this stamp are the masters and give the tone. Men such as these must needs fall back on the most obvious good in life, and regulate their course by the fundamental maxim that pleasure is pleasant.

Between merely sensitive beings each struggling to secure to himself the largest share of the very small stock of pleasant sensations, what else save a furious competition can ensue? The endeavour to get on, to better oneself, as the ironical phrase is, must then be the universal endeavour. And this endeavour is nothing more or less than a return to primitive life in a more polite form, to the war of all against all. Laws, indeed, constrain this war to take forms in which, unknown to the combatants, it promotes the general good. But it remains the antithesis to all true society. It effaces from the soul of our modern myriads the last vestige of public spirit. Their sole function is to make money, and in our age the making of money assumes the dignity, almost the painfulness, of a great moral effort.

Pursued with a tension of mind which leaves no room for frivolous mirth ; pursued in a disinterested spirit which takes no care of faculties conducing to a rational enjoyment of riches ; pursued with a mechanical gravity which relaxes as little amid the overflow of heaped-up plenty as under the pressure of penury, this grand occupation of becoming rich lifts us far above the level of the beaver, and places us almost upon a par with the turnspit dog.

In a society given up to competition for private ends, public opinion is not more powerful than elsewhere, but its power serves to depress and intimidate. The public opinion of a competitive differs from the public opinion of a patriotic or devout age, as the public opinion of a mob differs from the public opinion of an army. A mob is more cowardly than any individual rough ; an army is braver than its bravest soldier. Sympathy makes all the difference in both cases ; but in the one case it is the sympathy of weakness and ignorance ; in the other case it is the sympathy of skill and courage. The public opinion of the Spartans at Thermopylæ was in favour of fighting and dying ; and each of them feared death less because his comrades did not fear it. The public opinion of the Egyptians at Tel-el-Kebir was in favour of running away ; and each man ran faster because he saw all his friends running too.

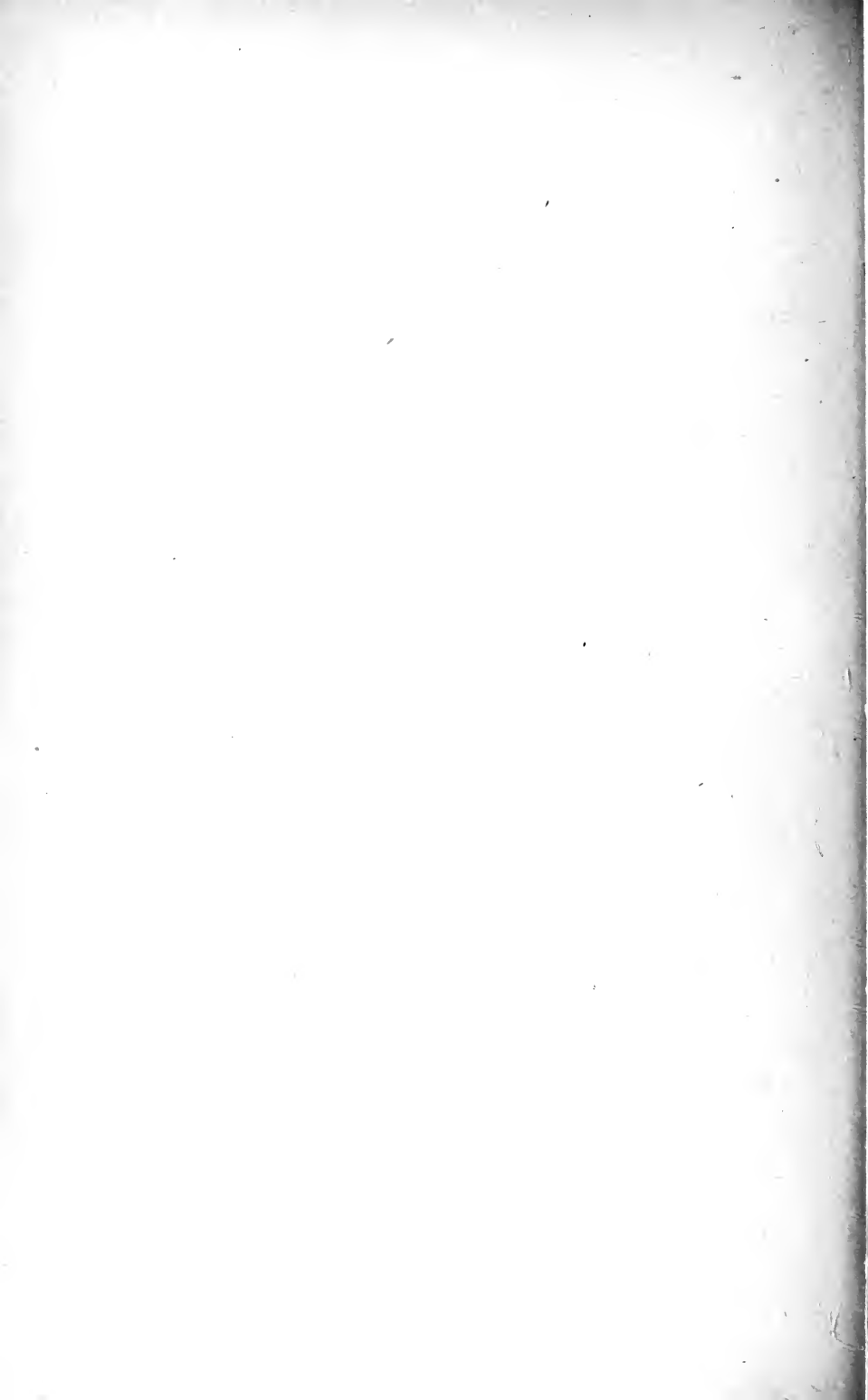
Not that society is so thoroughly organized as to allow no scope to the individual will, but that society organized to make money is for every other purpose disorganized ; not that education and public opinion thwart, but rather that they inflame the natural and unreflecting impulses of the individual ; not that men are enslaved, but rather that they

are under no discipline; these seem to me the reasons why we have so few great men. In its great man the whole society finds expression. If the great man is born into a sodden, and earthy society, the chances are that he will be stifled in its thick, unwholesome steams. If he lives on, he lives alone and with a life half-suppressed; not expanding, not mellowing with time, but with each passing year becoming more acrid, more hopeless, and more unreasonable. For he is always a man among children; but too often he is a man among children prematurely decrepit and old.

Our own age has seen the dissolution of society and the triumph of materialism. It has felt their consequence in the degradation of the individual. But a new social order grows by the very necessity of man's nature. And by that same necessity, materialism cannot be our lasting creed. It is as ill-suited to the practical as to the speculative requirements of man. Chaos inward or outward is too painful to be enduring. We cannot do without fixity, unity, consistency. Soon or late we shall find them again. One pervading principle will determine the character of our institutions and our ideas. A rational education will then become possible. Education will then provide men with a point of view, with methods, and with principles. At present it only stuffs the mind with a medley of undigested notions, contradictory propositions, conflicting feelings, fragments of literature, scraps of science, and smatterings of art. At present it merely sows the seeds of intellectual dyspepsia and spiritual liver complaint. But hereafter it will be a regulated and healthy gymnastic, developing a sure foot, a firm hand, and a clear

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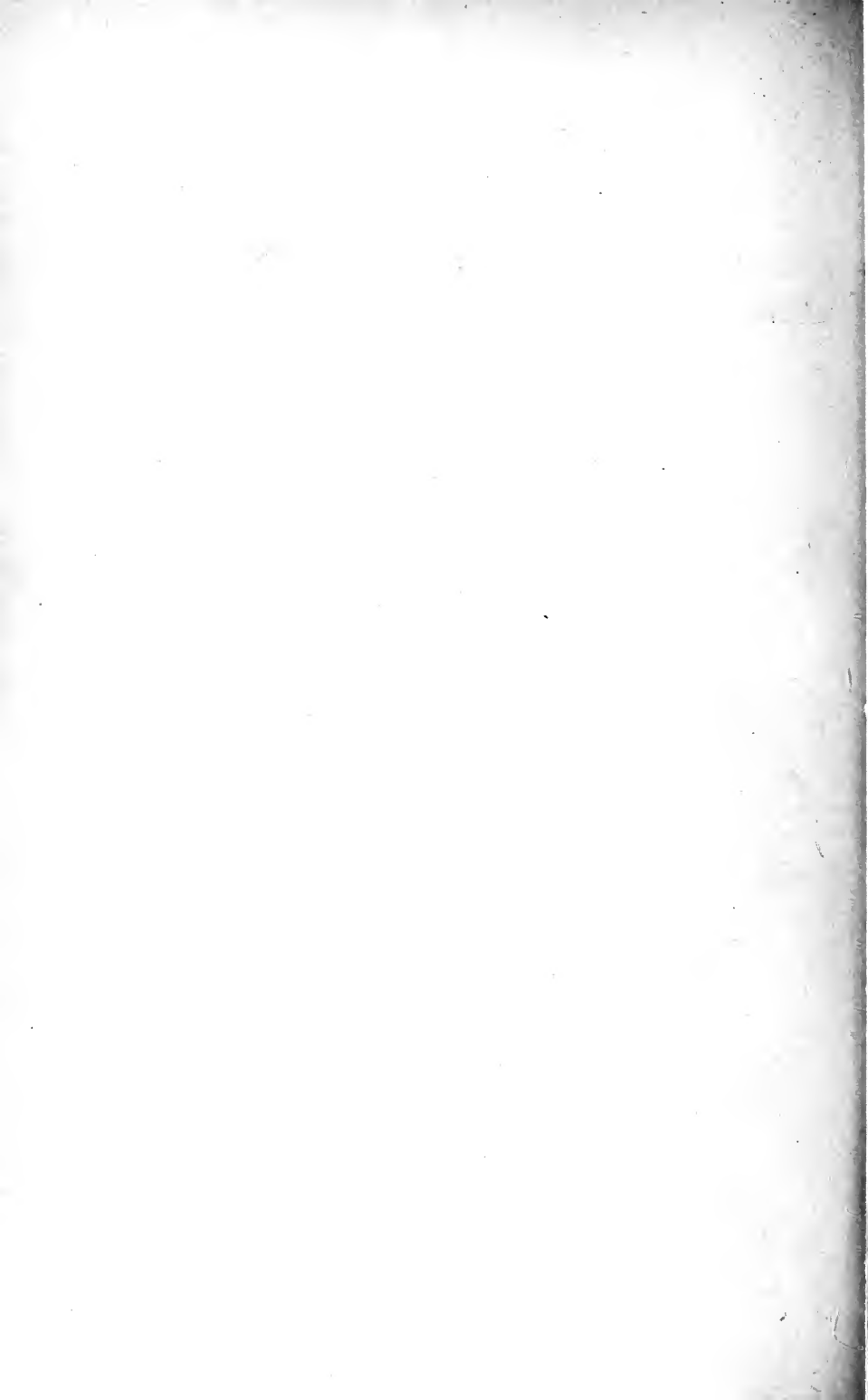
eye. Now it makes a *dilettante*; hereafter it will make a man. And a society of men will present manly careers. Its opinion will be a tonic. The individual will be carried along by wind and tide instead of struggling amid cross currents until he gets the cramp. And then he will be able to do great things; he will be a great individual; and society, once more abounding in such, will be an exhilarating, a glorious society.





VI.

*THE FUNCTION OF THE STATE.*



## VI.

### *THE FUNCTION OF THE STATE.*

IF the line of thought followed in the preceding pages be not altogether misleading, every civilized man owes his character to his society. When his society is most complex, his character is most developed. When his society is most closely knit, his character is strongest. When his society demands most from him, his character is noblest. And since development, energy, and elevation of character make up all that we mean by individuality when we use individuality in a good sense, it follows that the most perfect individual owes most to his society. If society may be charged with fostering our petty passions, and countenancing our vulgar ambitions, society must be allowed to supply the only possible discipline of our best faculties and the only possible inspiration of our highest efforts. It is by the help of society that the individual rises superior to social prejudice. It is not therefore by reducing to the lowest degree the influence of society upon its members that we shall do most to multiply vigorous, accomplished, and harmonious characters. The great individual, be he statesman, poet, or philosopher, is original because he is receptive, strong because he is

susceptible; whilst the eccentric is commonplace because exclusive, and weak because for ever afraid of being in debt to other men.

Society acts not so much to restrain as to emancipate. Association instead of cramping multiplies our several strengths. For many of the subordinate purposes of life, the spontaneous association of a few is sufficient. But since life without a conscious unity is not human, and since all modes of action are irrational, save in so far as they are combined into the supreme effort to attain one satisfying object of desire, it follows that the more we multiply the lower forms of energy, and the more we perfect the mechanism through which they work, the more do we need some idea which shall concentrate all these energies, some institution which shall bind all these cunning contrivances into one symmetrical whole. As partial associations for partial ends increase in number and in power, we come to need more than ever the association of all men for the purpose which interests all. As the social body grows more complex, the social life must grow more intense. Intensity involves unity. The unity of social life finds expression in the State.

The blind, unconscious individual is the product of the blind, unconscious society. The conscious and reflecting individual is the child of the conscious and reflecting society. Such an individual is a citizen; and such a society is a State. For such a society has an intelligence and a will. It has a national character. It has an organ to express these: the organ known as government. Such a society has a moral as well as a physical life. It partakes

in progress as well as in evolution. In the state of nature, society determined the individual, and was determined by him. The individual and the social development were inseparable. This mutual dependence and this intimate union survive, but are transformed in the age of reflection. The moral and rational society, the State, is aware that it is what its citizens are. It acknowledges the duty of doing what it can for their welfare. And the thinking and responsible individual finds not only that society has made him what he is, but also that he can improve himself only by improving his society. In place of an individual and a community linked by a mere physical necessity, acting and reacting without will or conscience, and evolving one another by mere force of appetite, we have a citizen and a State united by ties of love and duty, conscious of the way in which the one affects the other, and each attaining to a better life by endeavouring to better the other.

It follows that the interest of the citizen and the interest of the State are merely two names for one thing. The State lives only in the life of the citizen, develops only in developing him. The true function of the State is to make the most of the citizen. This is its only inexhaustible function. This function includes, explains, and justifies all the rest.

How is the State to improve the citizen? In every age men recognize a certain ideal of health, of strength, of morals, of intelligence, of accomplishments, and good manners. Everybody tries more or less to conform himself to this. But nobody quite succeeds in realizing it. He lacks the opportunity, the means, or the will. The State is

justified in doing for him that which he is really unable to do for himself. But inability is just as vague a term as improvement. Inability may exist in any degree. It admits of no general definition precise enough to be of use in practice. In every particular case, the degree of personal impotence which calls for public aid must be determined by experience and good sense. All that a theoretical writer can do is to suggest the ways in which practical men are most apt to err when they try to measure this impotence. Too strictly to construe it is to narrow the beneficial action of society. Too liberally to construe it is to refuse the individual any life of his own. We may lay down the general rule that when the State seeks to supply the wants of the citizen, its aim should be, not so much to satisfy his present desires, as to excite in him the desire of better things. The State should so assist the citizen as always to raise his ideas more than it raises his condition. The State should interfere, not to supersede his energies, but to divert them into nobler courses. In order to be more exact we must enumerate the several functions which upon this view of the matter the State ought to discharge. For this purpose we need not distinguish between the functions of the supreme and those of subordinate authorities. Of this distinction we shall speak hereafter. It highly concerns the efficiency of administration. But it does not affect the solution of our present problem. Acts done by the imperial and acts done by the municipal government are equally acts of the State.

The first and most indispensable function of the State is that of providing for the public defence. This function is imposed upon the State at once by a physical necessity and

by a moral law. Next, and not less indispensable, is the duty of keeping order within its own dominions. And this also is a moral obligation. It is the first step in the education of the citizen. But because these functions are essential to the existence of every State, they have been construed as mere matters of expediency. Because they absorb nearly all the energy of most civilized governments, many have thought them to be the only functions of a State. And thus the function of the State has often been reduced to the duties of coastguard and policeman.

Security of life and property is the first condition of progress. The second condition is the production of wealth. In countries in which individuals have neither the capital nor the qualities requisite for a plentiful production of wealth, the State has to undertake many industrial enterprises which are absolutely indispensable to this production. In all countries it retains possession of such instruments of production as are too important to be entrusted to private persons, or can be more effectually worked by its own servants. Of the first, all high-roads in Europe; of the second, our own postal and telegraphic systems afford an instance. Some think that railways should be owned by the State. A much larger number would allow that in England the State should have done more than it did to determine both their construction and their regulation.

But in countries like modern England or the United States, it is less the production than the distribution of wealth which demands the attention of the State. I know that many still regard the distribution of wealth as determined by natural laws over which we can exercise no control. But the best contemporary economists have rejected this

fatalism as unscientific. Experience of what can be done by legislation and by the union of labourers has justified them in so doing. It is the interest of society to increase the number of persons fairly well to do. It is the interest of society to discourage the accumulation of such enormous fortunes as tend to corrupt their possessors, to set up a standard of indolence, luxury, and extravagance, and in the last resort to make private property insecure by making it hateful. Therefore in countries like our own the State should endeavour, by a cautiously graduated taxation and by judicious rules of inheritance, to mitigate the inequality of fortunes. In doing all this it must be careful not to prescribe classes, nor to drive wealth out of the community. It must remember the delicacy and complexity of economic problems. It cannot therefore do all which good men might wish that it were able to do. But it may effect something, and it may assert a sound principle.

With the question of the distribution of wealth the question of pauperism has an inseparable connection. Is the State justified in relieving distress as it is relieved in England under the Poor Law? Sincere and enlightened friends of the people have maintained that the relief of distress should be left entirely to private charity. They say that the relief afforded by the State can be afforded only in such a way as to prolong and deepen distress by cherishing those weaknesses which hinder men from making themselves independent. But even in flourishing communities a certain number of fairly upright, industrious, and careful persons always are on the verge of starvation. To preserve them from that fate appears to be the clear duty of the State.



For in the last resort no man must be allowed to die an untimely death, unless he has been convicted of a capital offence. Something like our workhouse system, only administered with more care and intelligence, seems necessary in every commercial country subject to great fluctuations of prosperity. As regards out-door relief, the pensioning of the miserably indigent, those most competent to form an opinion are agreed that it should be very frugally dispensed, and as soon as possible suppressed. To deal strictly with paupers is indeed a necessity of democratic socialism. Industry, self-respect, and the desire of improvement among the people are conditions absolutely essential to the success of any great and methodic effort to advance their welfare by Acts of Parliament and grants of public money. Without the help of individual aspirations, measures intended to spread civilization will only spread beggary. And it is now clear that these aspirations die out wherever the relief of the poor is laxly administered. It is also clear that the public purse cannot meet the double expense of educating everybody and of maintaining a crowd of idle persons. A wise policy leaves to every man the business of keeping himself alive; but lavishly supplies the means of making his life worth living.

No less important than the system of Poor-Law relief is the practice of alleviating the unequal distribution of wealth by expending public money upon various improvements in the condition of the poor, or by lending it to joint-stock companies or philanthropic associations formed in order to carry out such improvements. Should the imperial or

local government assist emigration? Should they lay out large sums in building houses to be let at low rents, or in buying land to be sold to the tenants under the most favourable conditions possible? Should they advance capital to such bodies as the Peabody Trustees or the Artisans' Dwellings Company? It seems to me that free gifts of public money to emigrants or to anybody else are only to be excused by the severest pressure of necessity. There are so many to receive; it is so pleasant to give away what is not one's own; the check of public opinion is so tardy and feeble, that ministers are constantly tempted to practise a liberality beyond the resources of the State. In principle there can be no objection to investing public money in land or houses to be let or sold at low rates. Only these transactions should be so carried out as at the end to leave the State free from all embarrassment. The State should buy land to sell to the tenants only when it has a strong assurance of finally getting back every penny which it has laid out. The State, if it build houses for the poor, should let them at such a rate as will, in the first place, provide for keeping the houses in proper repair; in the second place, make good the annual interest upon the money borrowed for their erection; and in the third place, provide a sinking fund for repayment of the principal so borrowed. In lending money for philanthropic purposes, it should be guided by similar considerations. And it should be satisfied with nothing less than the best security.

The imperial or local government should in no instance endeavour to be a general landlord. In the vicissitudes of trade and manufactures a great city may lose a large part of its artisan population. And in providing houses

for the poor the State should consider not only times of prosperity, but also times of depression. It should confine itself to such undertakings as will be solvent through all turns of public and private fortune. Thus, if it own one-third of the dwellings in such a city, and let these, although eminently wholesome and comfortable, at unusually low rents; then throughout all changes short of a general catastrophe, these dwellings will continue to be tenanted by persons capable of paying the stipulated rent. A government cannot possess the talents of a speculator. It cannot snatch a large profit from the jaws of chance. Since it cannot make brilliant strokes, it should attempt only such as are sure. As universal landlord, universal carrier, universal manufacturer, it would expose to adverse fortune a frontier longer than it could possibly defend.

Self-defence, internal order, a large production, and a tolerable distribution of wealth are the elementary necessities of national progress. A necessity more refined but equally pressing is the necessity of the best possible education, for every citizen. In terms so full and eloquent as to leave nothing to be said by those who come after him, Mr. Matthew Arnold has convincingly shown that not merely the best possible elementary education, but the best possible education in every kind is essential to a nation's greatness. Where the rudiments of knowledge are universal, you will find an intelligent class of artisans and labourers. Where a good liberal education can be had at a great cost, you will find a polished class of rich men. But neither the intelligent peasant nor the polished man of fortune is enough to constitute a truly enlightened nation. The largest enlightenment is of a nation, not of a class. There-

fore if we would have citizens in the grand style, if we are ambitious of belonging to a nation glorious in the annals of civilization, we must perfect culture in all its degrees. We must have a good primary, a good intermediate, and a good academic system. We must bring them into interdependence and harmony. We must so contrive that the universities shall supply to all inferior educating institutions a high standard of excellence and a staff of competent teachers. We must recruit the universities with all the genius and application of every class. We must at once train our highest intelligence upon the best methods, and provide it with a public which can understand and inspire its exertions. And in order to accomplish all this we must in every stage of education employ the resources of the State; although in each those resources must be employed in a different way.

Many may object that the lower and the higher culture have very different claims upon the State. That in a democratic society every citizen should attain a certain average of morals and knowledge they admit to be indispensable for the public safety. Therefore they say the State may wisely interfere to secure to every child this indispensable minimum. But the higher culture, they would argue, is a luxury for individuals, not a strength to the State. And then come all the old familiar arguments, which seem so unanswerable because they so adroitly flatter the indolence and self-conceit of a half-educated people. That our middle class has done very well without a good education; that in the countries where they have settled they do still better than at home; that in spite of a good education the French middle class is immoral and the German

middle class eats with a knife; that the education of our middle class is so excellent that it cannot be improved; that their political wisdom as recently as 1867 was unrivalled, that in religion they are so earnest, in business so strenuous, in social intercourse so delightful, in taste so delicate, in all domains of speculation so eminent for curiosity and penetration; that if by any chance their education could in any way be bettered, it will be so bettered by the racy wisdom of those who have already done so much for themselves and for mankind; and so on *ad infinitum*. These arguments cannot to the ordinary Englishman be in any way refuted. To anybody else they refute themselves. Although we dare not say so, we know that our middle class is not a brilliant success; that all its political bustle does very little for political progress; that all its wealth has not yet helped it to a noble and refined enjoyment of existence. We know too that of itself it will never perfect its own education. We know that for its education the State might do a great deal.

We have committed ourselves to the principle of public interference with every grade of education. We have reformed the universities; we have made grants in aid of intermediate education in Ireland and Wales; we have made elementary education compulsory, and, where needful, gratuitous. At first even elementary education by the State was recommended chiefly as a measure of police. It was recommended on the ground that men who can read and write are less likely to become paupers or criminals. But we are transcending this sublime theory of culture. We lengthen the period during which children must attend school; we enlarge the course and improve the quality of instruction.

We see that the only true limit to popular education is the limit imposed by expense. We feel that society should educate its poorest offspring, not merely to be a submissive drudge, but much rather to be a healthy, intelligent, and patriotic citizen.

Should the State provide for all children an elementary education free of cost? The weightiest argument in favour of so doing is that it would occasion a great intermingling of young people of all classes. The free school might thus become a useful means of softening manners and of uniting all conditions of men. Not only the rudiments of knowledge, but also good will and good breeding should be universal in a democratic age. On the other hand, it is well known that the elementary schools are ill-provided with teachers, and that the teachers are not always competent. To provide a great number of masterships at such salaries as might attract really able and well-educated men, would probably be much wiser than to grant everybody free entrance to elementary schools in their present imperfect condition. Since we can devote to primary education only a limited revenue, it seems best to employ that revenue in raising the standard rather than in lowering the cost. It is better that the working man should pay a little for a good education, than that he should pay nothing for a bad one.

Should the State insist upon having a monopoly of elementary schools? The State is bound to see that every child receives such an education as it can approve. If it can ensure this result by simply providing for the inspection of schools vested in private individuals, then a good deal may be alleged in favour of these schools. But inspection can

afford only an imperfect guarantee of excellence. It proceeds by way of examination, and examinations are very uncertain tests. They are not the real means of perfecting education. A system of education is perfected by training the teachers, by making the teacher's profession attractive, by limiting the number of his pupils and the number of subjects which he has to teach, by prolonging the term of school life, and by enforcing the regular attendance of scholars. These are the positive means of improving education ; whereas examinations at best are nothing more than a check. Thus a system of inspection is merely an auxiliary to any national school system. On these grounds it is desirable that all elementary schools should be public schools. For it is not easy to see how voluntary effort can provide the best elementary education which it is possible to give. And with less than the very best no great and opulent community should be content.

I do not attach very much value to the argument that voluntary schools are to be prized as experiments in elementary education. In the first place, the experience which we have already acquired is enough to determine all doubts of importance. In the second place, the number of experiments is always of less consequence than the capacity of those who make them. Voluntary schools are often established by persons or by societies who have not the wealth or perhaps the culture requisite for conducting the experiment to the greatest advantage. It is certain that the world has not learned more from our numberless private experiments in education than from the State systems of Germany. It is also said that a great deal of benevolence and public spirit finds scope in the maintenance of voluntary schools.

But if voluntary schools are less efficient than State schools, it would be unfair to sacrifice the intellectual interest of the poor to the moral interest of the wealthy. Besides, the rich and generous have many other ways of doing good to their country and credit to themselves. It would, however, be wrong to suppress voluntary schools by Act of Parliament. We ought to make the State schools so good as to draw from all other schools their scholars.

In trying to improve the intermediate, the State must vary the mode of action applicable to the primary schools. It need not make intermediate education compulsory. It should not make intermediate education gratuitous. Nor in a country like our own should it seek to control every intermediate school. Schools we have among us whose high pre-eminence and long renown offer for their usefulness a guarantee stronger than any inspection or supervision could afford. But these schools are few, and for the most part accessible only to the rich. The rest of our intermediate schools are generally dear and bad. To make them good and cheap is a proper object of national action. This object can be attained partly by making it unlawful for those who have not qualified themselves in certain prescribed ways to keep or teach in any school whatsoever, and partly by founding a great number of intermediate schools where the scale of charges, the salaries of the teachers, the system of instruction, and the testing of the pupils shall be regulated by the imperial or by the municipal authorities. When we have once secured such schools we need no longer require the elementary schools to undertake work for which they are not adapted. They fulfil their end in making every boy and girl thoroughly familiar with the rudiments of knowledge.



All boys and girls fit for more than these rudiments should be drafted into schools of a higher type, there to be instructed by specially trained teachers. As good schools always end by drawing pupils from bad schools, either the private schools would be forced into efficiency, or the state schools would come by degrees to receive most of the children of the middle class. There, in company with the chosen children of the poor, they would find a real education. And from the intermediate schools the most promising pupils would in due course pass on to the universities. So that there would then be established a perfect circulation of intelligence; and every one might be sure of all the schooling that could profit him.

As with the intermediate schools, so with the universities. In both instances it is unnecessary that the State should undertake the sole charge of education. But in both instances the State will interfere more than it has hitherto done. It is true that the State has achieved less for university than for elementary education. A certain timidity in dealing with venerable institutions, a conscious deficiency in the culture needed by reformers of liberal education, and that sordid view of knowledge and of life so generally diffused among us, have combined to make our policy in respect of the universities weak, wavering, and uncertain. Thus universities are founded to further especially the highest studies. The highest studies are those which most intimately touch upon the highest interests of man. Yet we have seen a Liberal Government so much afraid of Dissenters on the one hand, and of Ultramontanes on the other, as to propose to found a university in which these subjects should not be taught at all.

And it may be fairly questioned whether the average member of Parliament has any other ideas concerning university reform than that dons are too well paid, that the vacations are too long, that young men spend too many years at college, and devote too much time to literary and liberal studies. Under these circumstances we might well deprecate all further reform of Oxford and Cambridge, not because they are absolutely efficient, but because Parliament is absolutely unreasonable. Should the love of knowledge ever develop among us, should ministers ever find it prudent to consult the interests of science, as well as those of party, we might see a thorough yet judicious reform of those universities. In making them more useful as high schools, state interference has already proved beneficial. It would have been beneficial in many other respects had the intelligence of our rulers borne any considerable ratio to their power.

When the schoolboy or the undergraduate becomes a man and a citizen, his education by the State does not end. Even now the State acknowledges a duty to care for his health and intelligence. It punishes the adulteration of food and drugs. It undertakes the inspection of ships and houses, of factories and mines. It has already limited, and will hereafter limit more strictly, the hours of labour for women and children. It provides public parks and gardens. At no distant date it will provide baths and gymnasiums, schools of art and science. Libraries and museums it has begun to establish. A time may be near when the State will furnish all the appliances of wholesome recreation and of intellectual discipline. These means are much less expensive than we suppose. The modern printing-press

multiplies books at such a small cost, and the conditions of modern life allow a single copy to be perused by so many persons, that libraries sufficient for a reading public of thirty-six millions can be set on foot and maintained at a small expense to the community. Open spaces are indeed dear luxuries. But in stimulating energy and prolonging life, in promoting sobriety, cheerfulness, and innocent gaiety, they make returns which justify the largest expenditure of public money.

It is by means of the fine arts that the State can do most to refine manners, to blend classes, and to create a national culture. In the first place, works of art afford a very real, although a very various pleasure to men in all stages of refinement. One appreciates the story told, another the sentiment, a third the technical skill. In the second place, a familiar enjoyment of works of art more than almost any other pleasure developes those sensibilities which are most cruelly repressed in the struggle for existence. And lastly, all artistic enjoyment is social. It is to be perfected by communion, and a communion grows out of it. A masterpiece of architecture, painting, or sculpture keeps its first charm for myriads of beholders. Music and the drama act with a force proportioned to the number of their audience. The pleasure of beauty has in its nature nothing private, personal, or selfish. It can be multiplied indefinitely, and so to multiply it is the duty of the State.

Of late years we have begun to erect public buildings, which, if not beautiful, at least strive not to be ugly. Here and there in the capital and in one or two enormous cities we have founded galleries of painting and sculpture. We

are, however, hampered by prejudices dating from the time when all civilization centred round a court. Our best public collections are all in the capital, and in one quarter of the capital. Yet good public collections ought to be within easy reach of every inhabitant of every large town. Such collections cannot and need not be all enriched with works of the very highest excellence. Artists infinitely inferior to the greatest, artists whose names are hardly known out of England can teach a good deal to everybody. A variety of beautiful objects arranged in some clear and harmonious order, would have no trifling power to refine hundreds of thousands of intelligent men and women who now never see anything beautiful the whole year through. If merely disposed to form a pleasant promenade they would be of great service. But they can be disposed to do much more.

A national theatre in the capital, and in the chief provincial cities, theatres assisted by the municipal authorities, are indispensable instruments of any real education of the whole people. The drama is the highest form of art; and the English the greatest drama in any living language. But our actors are mostly bad, and will long continue to be so, because our public does not know what good acting is like. Our acted plays are bad because our public has but a very slight acquaintance with our classical literature. In order to have good actors we must have a good system of dramatic instruction. We must have public schools for actors as we have public schools for painters. In order to have good plays we must establish a national theatre devoted for the greater part of the year to the presentation

of our classic drama, and enabled by a subsidy from the public purse to open its doors at low rates, and to wait for an honourable success. Such a theatre would improve acting and renovate the plays acted by ennobling the public taste. With the help of similar theatres in the great provincial towns it would develop actors who could interpret, and audiences who could appreciate a modern and really national drama.

What has been said of the drama may also be said of music. In one word, all forms of art, but especially music and the drama, are interests of the community. For so long as man continues to be civilized, will all forms of art, and these forms particularly, be puissant creators of character. But with our growth of opulence, with the unsettling of all old ideas, with the preponderance of immense undisciplined masses of opinion, the artist finds himself exposed to all sorts of dangers, temptations, and perplexities. Let, therefore, the serious and intelligent public come to his succour; let them organize the education of the popular taste; and, again to refer to Mr. Matthew Arnold, let them begin by organizing the theatre. Imagination inured to our dreary actual England, fails to conceive the brilliance of an age when all classes shall contribute to the class of cultivated men; when artists will labour for the adornment of the State as well as for the luxury of private persons, and will have their reward in the applause, not of a coterie, but of a nation.

Admitting that the State is justified in assisting all other influences that make for progress, is it justified in endowing religion? Many would make an exception here.

They would make this exception upon one or both of two grounds: firstly, that all religious endowment infringes liberty of conscience; and secondly, that a church is dishonoured by receiving assistance from the State.

Those who argue that the endowment of religion is contrary to freedom of conscience, say that it is unfair to make any men contribute to the maintenance of a religion which he regards as impure, nonsensical, or absolutely vicious, and that it is equally unfair to attract men within the precincts of any one church by means of the bait of position, preferments, and worldly splendour. Stripped of their rhetorical ornaments both the above propositions amount to this, that it is unjust to make any citizen contribute to any kind of education which he sincerely thinks useless or hurtful. Now let us see whether the Liberal party have accepted this principle in other departments of education. Elementary education is enforced by law, and every citizen has to contribute to its cost, including the cost of gratuitous education for those who can afford nothing. The Dissenters think it hard that they should thus have to contribute to the maintenance of State schools which are not altogether secular. But the Roman Catholics protest that schools altogether secular are an utter infamy, and that it is against their conscience to contribute to the expenses of such schools. How, then, can freedom of conscience be safe so long as the State contributes anything to education? Yet no class of Liberals is inclined to repeal the Education Acts. Perhaps a majority of Liberals would be willing to make the State schools secular; but since they would thus relieve Dissenting at the expense of Catholic consciences, they could not pretend freedom of conscience

as their motive, but must allege public expediency or their need of the Dissenting vote.

Take another example. Many austere sectaries regard the fine arts as a trivial and corrupting waste of human energies. They look upon the study of the nude in art schools and the representation of the nude in art galleries as a filthy abomination. Yet the State provides schools in which pupils learn to draw from the nude, and galleries in which Academicians exhibit nude pictures. What the State provides is provided out of the pocket of every tax-payer, out of the pocket of these rigidly virtuous people. Yet nobody offers to come to their relief. Nobody therefore thinks them wronged. For surely the great Liberal party does not disregard the pangs of one sincere conscience. I should be loath to believe that the great Liberal party invokes freedom of conscience only at times when freedom of conscience can influence an election.

He who does not believe in any religion and he who does not believe in a religion supported by the State are in circumstances exactly similar to those of men who honestly disapprove of the Board Schools or of the Art Schools. The feeling of dislike may be more intense in the one case than in the other; but it is essentially of the same nature. The hardship in both cases is the same. Each has to contribute towards a form of education which the majority thinks useful, and which he thinks pernicious. So long as either is in a minority he must submit, and in submitting suffers no injustice. As soon as either is in the majority, he will make short work of his grievance. In either case freedom of conscience has nothing to do with the matter. To insist on regulating

the distribution of the public revenue in such a manner as to satisfy every individual conscience is to advance pretensions which would put an end to all government and to all society. The Roman Catholic has to pay for the machinery of civil marriage, which he regards as an instrument of fornication; and the Quaker has to pay for the machinery of war, which he regards as an instrument of murder. And it is quite right that the Quaker and the Catholic should submit to this constraint; for abstract freedom is concrete anarchy.

Let us next consider the argument that the Church is dishonoured by receiving assistance from the State. What is a State and what is a Church, that the liberality of the State should pollute the Church? A Church and a State are simply the most comprehensive forms of association. Their object, because it is the highest, is also the object aimed at by all rational beings. Some of us are interested in commerce, some in manufactures, some in art, some in science, some in enjoying themselves, but all are interested in leading the best possible life. All men are spiritual beings working under physical conditions. All men seek emancipation from the forces of nature within and without. A Church and a State exist solely in order to secure this public interest of all men; a full, a free, a rational, a human existence. A Church is not properly an organization for defending certain dogmas from criticism, or certain classes from equality. It is not even a mere expedient for securing future happiness to the mass of men who here upon the earth go in quest of immediate pleasure or immediate profit. A State is not merely a police contrivance to secure order, nor yet an Epicurean engine to manufacture general comfort.



A State is more than a brutal drill-sergeant caning and cursing his squad into mechanical obedience ; and a Church is something more than a sentimental dreamer bowing before an empty shrine or writing sonnets to an imaginary mistress.

The distinction between Church and State, we take it, is not that the one operates by spiritual, the other by corporeal means ; nor that the one secures our happiness in this, the other in a future life ; nor that the one aims at chimerical, the other at rational objects ; but simply this, that the Church is an association for the advancement of the ideal life ; the State an association for transforming the practical into the likeness of the ideal life. Both work into each other. Both are indispensable. Men must always strive to carry out their ideal, and for this struggle they must organize themselves in a commonwealth. But men are always doomed to fail in their attempt, and therefore they need a Church. In Greece man had not yet broken with nature. He was still in harmony with the visible world. And thus the State alone was enough to satisfy him. To him it was both Church and commonwealth. For beings purely spiritual, both Church and commonwealth might be absorbed in the communion of saints. But we need a State to realize as far as possible that to which we aspire ; and a Church to keep living those aspirations which can never be realized in full. We can neither lose ourselves in the real nor fulfil the ideal. As little can we separate the one from the other. Neither the Church nor the State can fulfil its true function whilst things spiritual and things temporal remain parted by an unfathomable gulf.

If, therefore, we think it right and proper for the State

to endow religion, how should we wish the State to act at the present day? When one form of religion prevails in any country, that religion is sure to be endowed. When there are several forms of religion almost equally current in the same country, and the partisans of any one think the partisans of all the rest victims of a damning error, there can be no exclusive endowment of any one, nor yet any concurrent endowment of them all. Logically and conscientiously they must come to blows, and in all probability civil government will be suspended by their conflict. But where there are many sects who regard themselves as common possessors of an inestimable truth, it becomes possible to endow them all. Thus in our own country it would be possible to endow all the great Protestant sects, although perhaps not the Catholic or the Jewish Church.

Under such circumstances as ours, a Parliament and a Ministry might very well say, "We think that religion is of the utmost possible consequence to the whole community; in its normal state a great blessing, and in its perversion a great curse. We think that all the existing religious bodies in this country have in them the essence of true religion, or at least so much thereof as can be hoped for in our present very imperfect condition. As for the differences which divide them, we own ourselves no judges of these; many we suspect to have only an historical interest, to have had their origin in tyranny on the one side or eccentricity on the other; and all we think to be innocent and somewhat trivial, not in the least going down to the substance of religion. Seeing, then, that the people of this country

have accepted these several types of doctrine and discipline, we are well content that they should be religious each in his own way, and we only desire that the peculiar religion of each may be as rational and refined as possible. Therefore we are ready to endow equally the ministers of every definite and recognized sect, to ensure to them a modest but certain livelihood, in order that they may be men of character, men of high intelligence, men superior to the temptation of exciting a bitter or a blind fanaticism in their congregations. We do not think riches necessary to the vigour of a Church. But we know that the men most fit for a profession will seldom enter it, if there they cannot find a competence. And although there be many congregations so wealthy that the free contributions of their piety and love are more than enough to provide all that a minister of God should desire, yet there are many more congregations where this is not so; where riches are unknown, where extreme poverty is all but universal; and where all the resources of private liberality are not sufficient to eke out the smallest income that can support a scholar and a gentleman. We do not wish that the poor should have no spiritual teachers, or teachers who are ignorant and wrong-headed. Nor do we wish that where his people are better off the minister should find himself placed in ignominious dependence upon the crotchets of a few of the richest among them. In short, we wish the clergy of every district and of every denomination to be able to claim the respect of all sorts and conditions of men; for we are fully persuaded that in our time pastors who are not held in respect by the intelligent will soon be

a laughing-stock to the whole community. We wish to create in every small area, however poor, however unlovely, however remote from the great current of life, of energy, of excitement, at least one centre of the highest and purest civilization. We wish to make religion enlightened and powerful, not by asserting the peculiar tenets of any one denomination, but by securing to all denominations a really qualified ministry."

I am well aware how little we could look for such a declaration of policy. I am well aware that of the few public men who ever bestow one serious thought upon religion, almost all contemplate religion in that sectarian spirit which leads us to prize our own creed because it is our own and not the creed of anybody else. I am well aware that what such men really desire is not so much the amelioration and elevation of their own, as the pleasure of crushing and degrading every other Church. I am well aware that the ablest, sincerest, and most consistent enemies of religious endowments hope to reduce the power of all creeds and of all Churches by depriving them of everything which tends to soften antiquated prejudice, to break down antiquated barriers; to bring religion into harmony with the social and scientific ideas of the present day, and to renew her strength by making her wise, generous, and humane. These acute thinkers clearly see that religion of the kind preached by the Salvation Army can have no enduring power in the modern world. They know that the triumph of such religion is also the triumph of indifference. Believing that all religion belongs to an obsolete phase of thought, they do well in trying to do away with religion. But to see them standing on the same platform and

talking the same verbiage with men whom they despise and who distrust them is a sight more ludicrous than edifying.

The endowment of religion by the State is in no sense absurd. For some time longer the movement towards a separation of Church and State will grow and spread, and will probably disendow every Church in Europe. But the free impulse of the spirit can be fettered as little by Liberal as by Conservative formulas. That free impulse makes for a recognition of the unity of every mode of spiritual life, and for a reconciliation of the spiritual with the practical. When this unity is once perceived, when this reconciliation is once perfected, the old jargon about ecclesiastical and secular, temporal and spiritual, sacred and profane, will no longer be heard or understood. Religion harmonized with science and common sense will no longer be a source of weakness and discord in the mind of each man and in the policy of every nation. The practical and speculative energies will again become religious. The State will endow religion as it endows art and learning. Like art and learning, religion will express the mind of the people, without becoming the tool of the minister.

Meantime, the principle of State interference, as it is foolishly called, gains ground with practical men because it affords the only solution of practical difficulties. In carrying out this principle we have to adapt ourselves to the facts of the present and to the burthens bequeathed by the past. We have to maintain an army and navy; we have to pay the interest and reduce the principal of our national debt; and we should be fools were we diverted by demagogues from securing either the national existence or the national honour. We have formidable rivals in manufactures

and commerce ; we must not therefore put our industries at a disadvantage. And again in carrying out this principle we have to remember the limit set by the limited faculties of man, by the divided attention of ministers, by the indolence of civil servants, by the routine of office, by the difficulty of thorough and independent criticism, by the opportunities of speculation and jobbery ; in short, by all those weaknesses of the state, which are not less real because so often magnified by the partial rhetoric of political quietists. But in our legislation we have acknowledged that the State can do more for its citizens than merely prevent them from robbing and murdering one another. How much more depends upon its resources and its intelligence.

The philosophers who hold that in our day all grown-up men and women can attain their normal development without any other assistance than is afforded by unlimited competition and unrestrained discussion, must have either a very narrow experience or a very weak imagination. Free competition may brace the nerves of the strong ; the weak it leaves in hopeless impotence. Free competition means to the strong victory, but to the weak death. It is in the course of free competition that the eagle pounces on the lamb and the wolf devours the ewe. Free competition is the struggle for existence, the law of the animal creation. And as for discussion, of what avail is the most lively discussion to those who have neither intelligence to follow its course nor means to verify its results ? Can the most lucid exposition of the population theory be expected to touch the miserable wretches who breed in the courts and alleys of a great city ? Of what idea save the idea of a little immediate gratification can minds like theirs be susceptible ? Can

they estimate their future sufferings? Can they balance their duties to men far away and to generations yet unborn? What can they do but follow the craving which pains them here and now? If life must be a burthen so long as they are sober, is eloquence likely to save them from getting drunk?

But take such people in hand without too nicely sparing their precious individuality. Drill them without remorse in the routine of elementary schools; provide them at moderate rents with houses fit for men and women; give them a chance of growing up healthy and intelligent. Then competition may do them some good. They are armed for the struggle. It is no longer a butchery, but a fair fight. They have come within the range of discussion. They are able to draw an inference and to act upon it. They have the beginnings of hope, of ambition, of public spirit, of curiosity and of taste.

We begin to be dimly aware of all this. We confess the duty of turning street-arabs into shoeblacks; the duty of opening to those who cannot force it for themselves a career of honest labour. But we need much more than universal elementary education; we need a great body of trained intelligence and enlightened opinion. Political power, once in the exclusive possession of the educated, will soon belong to all men. Those who bear sway in our time are no longer men who can devote all their time to government, but men whose chief care is to keep themselves alive. Society, once organized for self-defence, is now organized for production. Thus so far as we can look forward into the future, all civilized societies will be industrial and democratic. It would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that in such

societies the culture of the classes which enjoy leisure and a competence is at all less important than it was in states of the feudal type. These classes have lost much of their political, but little of their social, power. For many, many centuries, if not for ever, they will continue to give the standard and to set the tone. It is therefore of the very greatest consequence that their standard should be high and their tone exquisite; for civilization works downwards from class to class, each class absorbing as well as it can the civilization of the class above. And thus the culture of the well-to-do is of the deepest interest to every enlightened state. It is not, as we fondly imagine, a matter which may be left to chance, or fate, or quackery to supply.

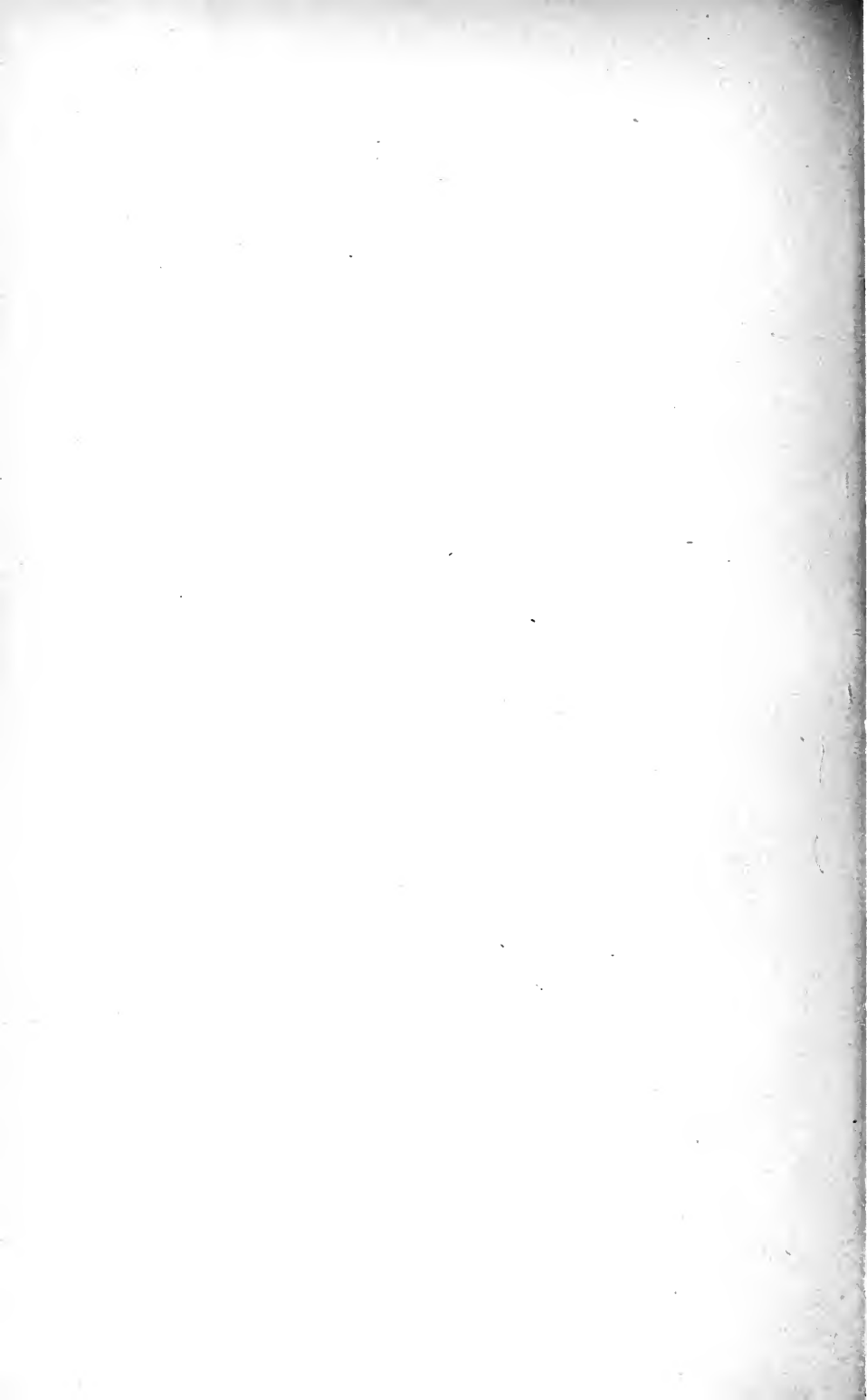
Democracies such as unfriendly observers have so often portrayed, vast clouds of human dust, congregations of restless, greedy individuals; all working hastily, and therefore dishonestly; democracies in which piety is narrow and sterile, culture pretty and finical, social life dreary, political life impure, and civilization generally stunted and meagre, democracies like these are not the only democracies possible. The fanatic, the wire-puller, the adventurer who has struck oil, or the peasant trying to live upon five barren acres, are not the last and highest types which the history of man can produce.

No, it is not so much modern facts as modern theories that are disheartening. The theory of life which regards a scramble for the means, first, of subsistence and afterwards of luxury, as the proper business of man; the theory of politics which allows to the State only the task of keeping order among such high-spirited competitors; these theories dismay us by confounding the conditions of social with the



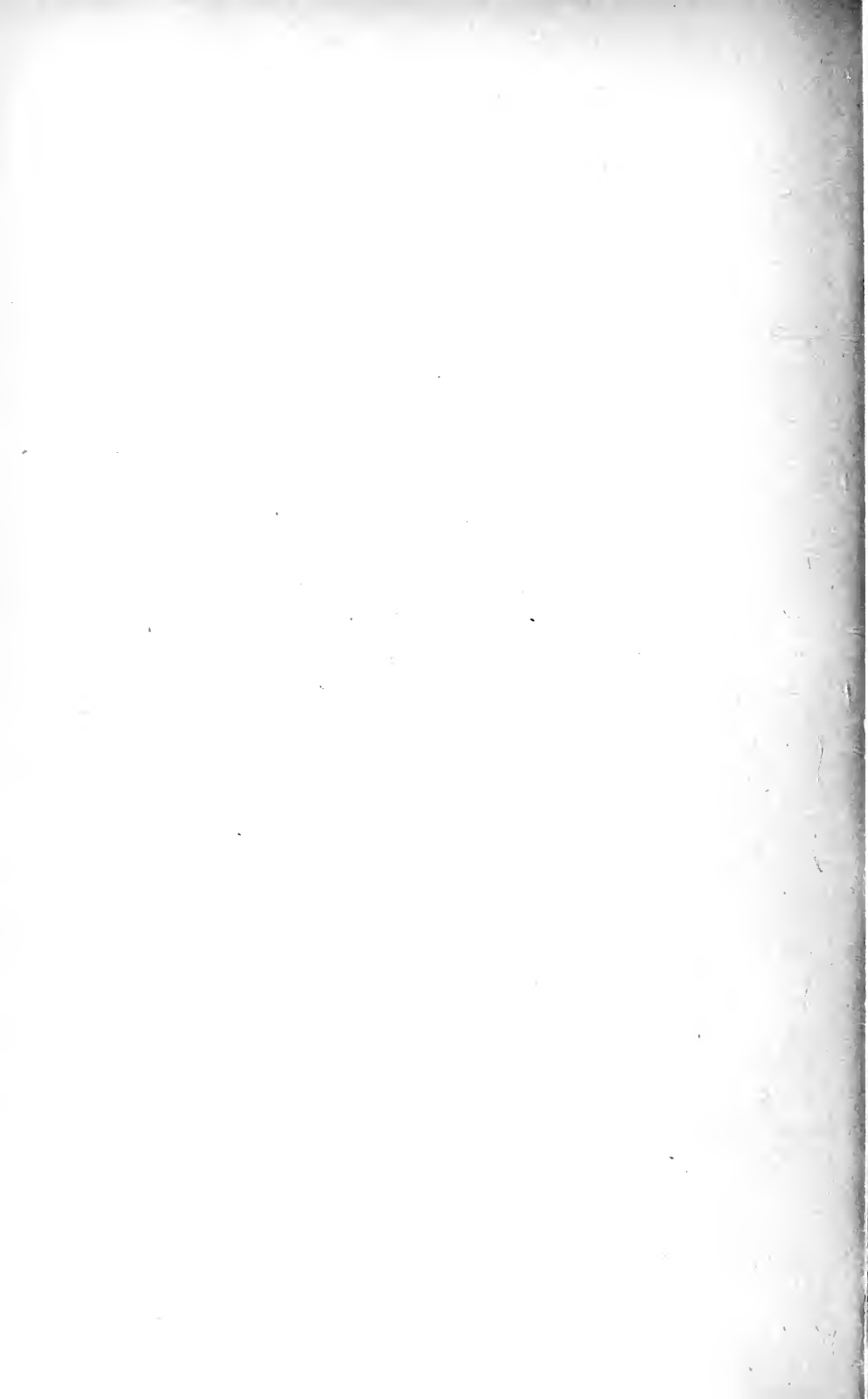
conditions of animal growth; for the doctrine of self-help suffices our animal nature. Hunger, lust, and vanity are strong enough to satisfy themselves, and the work of trying to do it for them would be endless; but with our social perfection it is otherwise. There mutual assistance, not self-help, is the law; there we are all members of one another; there each finds his well-being in the well-being of all.

Without annulling personal freedom, or abolishing private property, without any petty, vexatious tyranny, the legislator can do much. Legislation may always transcend by a little the average morals of the time, and then the moral average will rise to the level of the laws. Measures which to all men of sense once seemed the monstrous births of a distempered philanthropy, are now by all men of sense approved. Men are always capable of sacrificing for the public good some tiny portion of their private ease and superfluity; and every such sacrifice enables them to relish more keenly the pleasure of belonging to a civilized society. For with his society each must rise or fall. He may shun evil for himself, but he cannot escape the consequences of evil in others. Moulded by society, he is and must be; then let society mould him deliberately to a grand existence, not blindly to a mean one. To be overruled by the pitiless forces of chance and passion, this is slavery, this is the extinction of individuality; to be educated by the best intelligence and the best morality of our age, this is freedom, this is life. Life is so brief, yet life might be so full.



VII.

*LIBERTY OF ACTION AND  
DISCUSSION.*



## VII.

### *LIBERTY OF ACTION AND DISCUSSION.*

IN determining the function of society we implicitly determine the freedom of the individual. We might indeed adopt the opposite course, and by determining the freedom of the individual determine the function of society. But we were precluded from following this method because we looked upon society as something logically prior to its members. At least we looked upon society as the embodiment of individual character, and thought that the way to explain the individual was to study society; so that we naturally came to consider the function of society before the function of the individual. His function and his freedom are the same thing, for the sphere of individual freedom is simply the sphere within which the individual ought to act. Even in this sphere he is not an independent agent, for the history of his society defines the outward conditions as well as the inward endowment which combine to make up his life. The constitution of his society decides what course he must follow in order to obtain anything which lies in the good-will of his fellows; that is, any of the good things of this life. So long as he remains a child of nature, society plays upon him at every step, making him most obsequious when he flatters

himself that he is most wilful ; and when he becomes reflective, he only exchanges the physical magnetism of appetite for the spiritual magnetism of sympathy. The peasant and the poet are equally bound to their native hills. The Philistine and the philosopher are alike resultants of their society.

Freedom as the complete emancipation of the individual from all social influence is thus an utter impossibility. Happily it is also quite undesirable ; the only freedom worth having is the freedom of him who can either control or satisfy all his desires. Complete fruition of such freedom is not granted to any man here below, but it is only in society that it can be enjoyed at all ; and freedom, in the common sense of that term, freedom from the bonds of law or of public opinion, is good only in so far as it helps man to attain that other freedom which is an end in itself, the end of all social organization.

Society exists only in a tempered mixture of constraint and licence. Where the individual has no choice in his actions, there will be no society ; for where there is no individual will, there is no joint will ; where the individual is free to do whatever he pleases, there is no society, for there can be no organization. The society best organized for the highest purposes is the freest society, and since the best organization is always relative to the character and circumstances of the persons organized, the desirable quantity of freedom from restraint is always relative to that character and to those circumstances. Any one who asks how much freedom is good for men, really asks how much freedom is good for his contemporaries and countrymen, and this question the statesman, rather than the philosopher, is bound to answer.

Thus much all would nowadays admit. Publicists no longer talk of man's natural freedom, no longer attempt to establish an absolute measure of freedom for all times, countries, and peoples. They do not assume any abstract right to freedom. Allowing that no man has a right to anything save to that which is really good for him, they content themselves with trying to ascertain those principles which underlie all beneficial freedom and make it beneficial. This was the course adopted by Mr. Mill in his celebrated essay on Liberty. But it seems to me that he and many other authors of less ability and reputation occasionally lost sight of their admitted first premiss, and, whilst they advocated freedom on the ground of expediency, were not unbiassed by the doctrine of a former generation which asserted freedom as man's natural and indefeasible right.

In this chapter, therefore, I propose to resume briefly the discussion on the principle of beneficial freedom. We have already come to the conclusion that the State has a positive duty to its citizens. Is this duty reconcilable with the formula that every individual should enjoy as much freedom as is consistent with the equal freedom of everybody else? Or may not the individual sometimes be better for coercion not justified by this formula? May there not be constraints which on the whole operate to enlarge every man's capacity for action and enjoyment? May not the individual life be cramped by this exaggerated respect for a mere negation? In giving an answer to these questions it has been usual to deal separately with freedom of action and freedom of discussion. Although this distinction seems to me to have no root in the nature of things, to be verbal and possibly misleading, yet as it is familiar, it has a practical con-

venience. Let us therefore accept it here. And firstly let us resume and criticize the arguments adduced respecting the true principle of freedom of action.

Many will allow that barbarous nations are better and happier for a good deal of constraint applied by a government more civilized than its subjects. But they assert that among enlightened people like ourselves force should be employed solely to maintain order; that argument and persuasion are the only proper instruments of reform. Surely they forget that, far as we are removed from the savage state, we are yet nearer to it than to such a state of perfection as even we can conceive, to say nothing of the perfection imaginable by some better and wiser generation. The really important thing is to compare, not ourselves with savages, but our own practice with our own ideal. The vital question is this: shall we best attain our ideal by granting to every individual the utmost freedom compatible with the existence of civil society? If not, we ought not to scruple at coercion, used of course with a full knowledge of the responsibility which it imposes, and of the circumstances of its exercise.

Persons who make this distinction between barbarous and civilized communities forget that they judge those by their diffused barbarism, and these by their concentrated civilization. But among barbarous nations whatever culture exists is more or less common property, whereas among civilized nations culture is more unequal in distribution than riches. Among barbarians we find no contrast like those which sever Goethe, or Hegel, or Napoleon, or Darwin, from a day-labourer or a domestic servant. Nay, in the midst of our civilized society thousands lead a life worse than the life of almost any savage, a life of want aggravated by the



neighbourhood of opulence and of ignorance which looks darker in the presence of science. The savage leads a life not wholly without variety or without repose ; he is a hunter, a shepherd, something of a politician, perhaps a great warrior. But the drudges of civilization are only too happy if they can stave off the pangs of hunger by repeating some mechanical operation until their strength is exhausted and their day is done. Even if we avert our eyes from this most miserable class to the class next above them, we behold a multitude whose life is nearly as monotonous, as narrow, as unmeaning as the life of the barbarian. Classes like these have obtained political power, and must be considered in determining the principles of legislation. In other ages they gave the legislator no trouble, because they were confounded in the promiscuous herd of slaves or serfs. Thus the modern statesman has to deal with a society in some respects not more but less civilized than the most renowned Oriental or antique societies. He has to deal with myriads on whom eloquence spoken or written can make no deep or durable impression. These myriads need a little restraint and a great deal of assistance before they obtain a position in which they can really help themselves or be improved by mere persuasion.

Again it has been said that there are deeds which affect only the doer and others which affect the community as well ; that there are self-regarding acts and social acts. Let us consider the value of this distinction upon which Mr. Mill in his book upon liberty laid so much stress. Even Mr. Mill allows that nobody can perform a single act which does not exert a certain influence upon society. Thus a drunkard harms the community in various indirect ways.

He often injures it in some direct way also. Then, and not till then, says Mr. Mill, the community may fairly punish him.

A confirmed drunkard weakens his community for every useful purpose, for national defence, for the production of wealth, for political progress, for joint moral and intellectual improvement. He does something worse than all this. He transmits to his children a bad constitution and a powerful impulse to vice. In each of these respects a drunkard offends, and offends most heinously, against the public welfare. Yet he is not to be punished because in making himself drunk he does what is merely a self-regarding act, merely injures his own body and his own mind. But suppose that the drunkard becomes unable to pay his debts or to maintain his children. Then he may be punished, because his failure in these respects is a failure to discharge social duty. He directly injures other men.

I do not see how this distinction can for a moment be maintained. Every act may be resolved into a phase of the will followed by sensible consequences. The sensible consequences distinguish an act from a thought. The phase of will makes an act something more than an affection of the nerves. No human power can punish anybody for his thoughts, or should punish anybody for that which could not be in his thought. But whenever thought translates itself into action, there is something which must affect other men beside the agent, something of which other men may and should take cognizance; something which lies in their discretion to reward or punish. Every action, although in its origin self-regarding, is social in its result. According as a man's action affects his neighbours more or less directly and powerfully, it may be termed social or self-regarding;

but the distinction can be only a distinction of degree ; and however important in practice cannot be ultimate in theory.

Even were the law to confine itself within the limits marked out by Mr. Mill, it would still punish drunkenness, although casually and indirectly. When it punished the drunkard for failing to pay his debts, or to maintain his children, it would punish him not for the simple failure, but for a failure involving in the one instance a fraud upon his creditors and in the other instance a fraud upon the State. It would punish him because his failure was culpable, because in its excuse he could allege nothing better than a vicious habit. It would not punish an honest man disabled by a general commercial depression from satisfying his creditors or supporting his family. Thus indirectly the law would punish drunkenness ; and if indirectly, why not directly ? Here again we can allege considerations of expediency only, not of principle. We may conclude, therefore, that the proper object of criminal law and of public censure is an immoral act which injures society ; in other words, any immoral act. But for practical reasons many immoral actions are exempted from the correction of criminal law, and some elude even public opinion.

So acute a thinker as Mr. Mill could hardly have accepted the distinction between self-regarding and social acts, had it not grown naturally out of the social theory current among his predecessors. The distinction between self-regarding and social acts appears to be an offshoot of the doctrine of the social contract. Before the making of the social contract man had but one sphere of action, the selfish or personal. After the making of the social contract, he had two spheres of action ; in the one sphere he acted under

the terms of the social contract, in the other sphere he acted under the laws of his nature. From this point of view we can, we must distinguish between social and self-regarding actions. From any other point of view we cannot so distinguish without a gross fallacy. The distinction is impossible to those who look upon man as receiving from society his whole character and his whole endowment, and as reacting upon society at every moment of his life. Those who have once appreciated the infinite subtlety of relation between the individual and his society will no more attempt in politics to divorce the individual from the social life than they would attempt in physiology to divorce the life of the brain or of the stomach from the life of the body. Distinctions like these have their source in the first crude conceptions with which a philosophic school begins its survey of the world. The conceptions it may afterwards drop ; but their deductions it usually retains.

Again, it is said that the individual is the best judge of his own happiness. Even if we take happiness to mean the greatest possible amount of pleasure, this proposition is by no means accurate. Taking pleasure in its lowest sense, pleasure without regard to its source or quality, it is very certain that men are constantly missing the greater pleasure in their eagerness to seize the less. All that we can say of their fitness to judge what will most please themselves is this, that they are better critics of their own pleasure than other men who have some strong personal bias. But even if men are really competent to determine what would be most pleasant for themselves, the fact is of very little consequence to those who hold that the end of action is something quite different from pleasure. If happiness mean anything else

than the greatest amount of pleasure, it is still more certain that the individual is often a very bad judge of his own happiness.

In the first place, a great number of individuals have never been trained, so that their moral judgment is as the moral judgment of a child. Nobody pretends that a child is better qualified than any one else to determine what will make it happy. If it is said that everybody ought to have been trained in youth to know what was for his own good, I welcome the admission that the State is bound to provide for the moral education of all its citizens, and that the citizen is most likely to be happy when he has imbibed the moral ideas of his society. But after the State has done all that can be done to educate its citizens, the education of most of them is limited to a very meagre course, lasting but a few years, and pursued under every conceivable disadvantage. To say that such a training is sufficient to mature the moral faculty is merely to indulge in a play upon words. It is because men refuse to recognize the necessary limits of elementary education that they are so angry when it fails to yield the glorious results which have so often been foretold.

Again, the individual very often knows what will make him happy, but does not act upon his knowledge. Surely it is a truism that every man has two selves; the one self looking only to the most intense immediate pleasure, the other self to a good commensurate with the whole of life. It is a truism that men the most acute, men the most refined are for ever yielding to their meaner self. They see what is right; they would fain do what is right; they would often be glad of some slight external influence which would con-

strain them to act in accordance with their own better nature. But for want of strength they actually choose to do wrong. All of us on many occasions, many on almost every occasion make this unhappy choice. Many men have grown up under such circumstances that one knows not whether or no to call them free in making it.

But it will be said that the individual can never master his worse self except he have full and constant freedom to comply with it. Temptation, men say, is necessary to strengthen character. Who proposes, who hopes to abolish temptation? Every one of us is tempted at every moment of his life. If we are imperfect, certainly it is not for want of opportunities to exercise our will. Those who are so much afraid of leaving temptation with the things that were, with the Corn Laws and the Established Church of Ireland, forget that all moral questions are questions of degree. An ill-disciplined man living under constant and vehement temptation to do the baser thing does not lead a life which strengthens his character or develops his sense of responsibility. He is certain to yield pretty often. At every fresh temptation he struggles less fiercely than before. At last he sinks to the level of his surroundings, identifies himself with them, and becomes as unlovely as they.

Suppose the same man somewhat better educated, suppose him freed from a few of those grosser enticements which benumb our reason by inflaming our senses; would this man be a weaker man? would his feelings of responsibility be less? Not at all. He has still abundant matter whereon to exercise his moral strength. He has still to choose between the lower and the higher life. Only he

now makes his choice between a low life which is not so low, and a high life which is a great deal higher. An end has been put to the most elementary moral conflicts, conflicts rarely experienced by any healthy, comfortable, and well-educated man, conflicts in which victory is but the beginning of any spiritual life and in which defeat is harder to escape, as well as more fatal when it comes than in any others. But conflicts succeed not less inevitable or less serious, although more subtle and more delicate. Just as the cessation of war would only refine without abating the struggle for existence, so the cessation of bestial allurements would only refine without relaxing the moral conflict. No State regulation, no State system of repression or encouragement can ever release man from the terrible option to do good or to do evil. Responsibility is too much our nature to be extinguished even by checks upon drunkenness or upon prostitution.

Without the sense of responsibility, it is true, there can be no moral life. Even children in their moral training must be left in great measure free, because a strong sense of responsibility is not too dearly bought by a few small lapses from what is absolutely right. But it is a first principle in education to keep children out of harm's way. The sins left possible to them are very small sins. The wisest parents do not try to produce heroic men and women by giving their little boys and girls an early acquaintance with the pothouse or the stews. In later years all sensible persons exert for themselves the same moral prudence. The man who is in his right mind does not court inducements to vice. The pious man prays to be delivered from temptation. However devout, the

African virgins immortalized by Gibbon displayed rather the weakness than the strength of human nature. In every case in which we are familiar with all the circumstances, and in which we are really anxious about our own virtue or the virtue of somebody else, we regard temptation to coarse and brutal vice as something to be, not sought, but shunned. We do not then fear lest our caution should enervate our will. We are too well aware how hard it is to be even passably good. We know too well how far off perfection are the very best of men.

If these considerations possess any weight, the individual has no claim to a freedom which he uses for immoral purposes. Neither any theory of abstract right nor any principle of concrete utility can guarantee immunity to certain modes of action irrespective of their being moral or immoral. The State has a right to punish all moral delinquency, and to punish it in proportion to its shade of guilt. Why, then, does the State punish some vices and restrain others, leaving the rest untouched? Why does it often direct its vigilance and severity against the lesser rather than the greater vices? This seeming inconsistency is easily explained by practical considerations.

Some offences the law singles out for the severest retribution, not because they are infallible proofs of a thoroughly corrupt or hardened disposition, but because they most directly threaten the order of society. Many a murder is less detestable than many a seduction; but then murder more than any other crime tends to annihilate social life. Again, the State can operate in the repression of vice only on the principles of the criminal law and through the courts of justice. In his admirable book, "Liberty and



Fraternity and Equality," Sir James Stephen has pointed out with the precision of a lawyer and the clearness of a literary man, that the machinery of criminal law and the rules for setting it in motion can never be suitable for the repression of any but the most palpable and obvious immorality. Even in respect of acknowledged crimes it is difficult to prove their commission, more difficult to estimate the offender's moral guilt, most difficult to punish in such a way as will reform and not harden. But in respect of vices not considered criminal, these difficulties usually amount to impossibilities. They could be detected only by a system of espionage which would revolt all honourable men, make all vile men formidable, and poison all the innocent pleasures of existence. They could be proved only by methods which must elicit an amount of false witness infinitely and incalculably surpassing the habitual perjury committed in our extant courts of law. They could not be punished with even a slight approach to judicial accuracy, and their punishment would place in the hands of frail and corruptible men an unlimited power over the life, the honour, and the fortunes of all other men.

Such were the mischiefs which turned into an intolerable tyranny the spiritual jurisdiction of the mediæval Church. That jurisdiction ended by fostering every vice which it had been designed to repress. Men flung it off, and men will never endure it again. But we should remember that the spiritual jurisdiction was not vicious in principle, although harmful in practice. That every moral offence should meet with just so much retribution as it deserves, is half the political ideal of every healthy mind. Could the spiritual jurisdiction have been exercised with the wisdom and purity

requisite, that is to say, with the wisdom and purity of God, it would have been as beneficent as it was pernicious. In so far as society can exercise it without incurring its evils, in so far society has a right to exercise such jurisdiction.

Over and above those considerations which in all ages and countries are equally forcible to limit the scope of criminal justice, there are other considerations whose force varies from time to time, and from place to place. Where men are crowded together in great masses, as in armies or in the poor quarters of large cities, order and decency require a much more constant interference of authority. The rich live so much apart from one another that they need not witness each other's sins. If a rich man offend against good morals, public opinion requires him to hide his transgressions, and his wealth affords him the means of doing so. He can be placed in moral quarantine. But the poor must live where their means will permit. The sober, thrifty, and laborious must rub against the dissolute, the reckless, and the idle. They must bring up their children among sights and sounds of all others the most carefully screened off from the children of the rich. Thus the situation of the poor demands, and the opinion of the most estimable poor supports, a stringent system of police. Their freedom is really infringed by the vices of other people. Accordingly they value very little the freedom of other people to be vicious.

On the other hand, the State always errs in attempting to punish offences which the public opinion or private conscience of the age does not seriously condemn. A Greek legislator could not have punished certain vices as they are punished by modern codes. Instead of purify-

ing morals, he would have revolted his contemporaries. Again, the condition of things may be such as to make it certain that vast numbers will commit offences severely censured by conscience and by opinion. It is, then, useless to attempt by extreme severity the extirpation of the offenders. Their number, their own feeling that they are not worse than most other men, and the commiseration inspired by their sufferings, would all combine to make penal laws inoperative. Thus criminal law cannot do very much for the radical reformation of society. If society is corrupt, the law must be lax.

Finally, some vices are punished in full without any interference of the law. Offences which cause the offender to be regarded as utterly unworthy of any trust, entail upon him sufficiently heavy loss and humiliation. Thus lying in men, apart from the necessities of trade or of politics, and unchastity in women, are already punished with an indiscriminating rigour. In respect to them, further severity is not desirable. Often public opinion punishes them more heavily than justice requires.

Public opinion supplements public justice. It cannot help dealing with the lives and actions of individuals. It cannot help censuring immorality even where self-regarding. That public opinion should be blind, and that public opinion should be weak are equal evils. As an instrument of moral education it is finer than criminal law. There are limits to its operation, however; limits set by circumstances, and not by any principle forbidding men to judge or to act upon their judgment of the conduct of any individual.

Like the criminal law, public opinion can only lay down general maxims. Men will not agree on more than a few broad rules of conduct; or if they agree on more, they will not feel deeply about it. These broad rules take very little account of the complexity of life. Therefore all rational men are cautious in applying them to estimate the actions of any particular person. Again, public opinion can as little as law ascertain the spiritual process which results in an action. Law, indeed, excludes, and public opinion admits of, sympathy. But, on the other hand, a judge pronounces only after the most careful investigation of the facts; whilst the public has neither the time, nor means, nor wish to ascertain any one circumstance with precision. So that the judgments of public opinion are oftentimes rougher than the judgments of criminal justice.

Moreover, a public opinion which did not respect the privacies of life would make life intolerable to all men with any tincture of delicacy or spirit. It would poison all domestic or social enjoyments. More than the worst system of law, it would encourage those basest of all vices, prying and false witness. It would turn every man and woman into a common informer. It would stimulate to their rankest excess all the malignity and mendacity in the world, and it would end by producing a state of things such as exists in many religious orders, where human nature is degraded to the lowest by the necessity of always seeming to stand on the highest level.

Public opinion, although the work of all, is determined by a very few. Those who write and speak, those who rule in churches, or preside in society, influence public opinion out of all proportion to their own numbers or their own merits;

and they would become tyrants of the most terrible kind if public opinion were fierce, restless, and indefatigable. Sometimes fanaticism makes it such, and then its accredited mouthpiece becomes absolute. Whenever this happens, a period of hypocrisy is usually succeeded by a period of abandonment. After one of these abnormal efforts, public opinion sinks into such a languor as the most shameless flaunting of gross vice or impudent selfishness can hardly break.

The power of public opinion is a power least useful where it is most wanted. It is partial, since men will not judge hardly the very vices to which they are most generally addicted, and which call most loudly for censure. It is spasmodic, because most men are for ever oscillating between a worldly indifference and a fanatic severity; so that they will for many years condone the practice of some notorious sin, and then suddenly fix upon some unhappy sinner. They blast his reputation, wreck his life, and flatter themselves with the thought of having executed rigorous, but needful justice. It is ill-natured, because men are ill-natured, because they are always pleased when they can report and half-believe evil of one another. Thus public opinion does not repress what most needs to be repressed; does not repress steadily or fairly; but rather represses in such a way as stirs up an untameable spirit of defiance in many of the offenders who are best worth reclaiming. It works badly even within its narrow bounds; but it remains indispensable. We cannot break, but we may direct its strength.

Thus far concerning freedom of action. Do the same considerations apply to freedom of discussion?

The act of expressing one's thoughts is not an act essentially different from all others. It is one of the gravest because it touches upon the most weighty interests of society. Therefore, to say that society may fairly control the actions of men, but must give full licence to their speech is to commit a complicated fallacy. If men may say anything, it follows that they may encourage one another to do anything. But many things are not lawful to be done. Society will punish those who do such things. And if they are punished, it would be unfair alike to them and to the public not to punish those who abetted them in doing ill. No practical man will dispute the right of the State to punish those who encourage others to break the law. But should the State in any case go further? Should it attempt to coerce those who encourage others not to break the law, but to violate the current morality of the age? We think that in certain cases it should.

Having already come to the conclusion that the State may justly set in motion against those who actually transgress received moral rules the engine of criminal justice, we think that it may employ the same engine against speculative assailants of accepted morality. Obviously the State can only enforce and protect such moral principles as have already found general acceptance. And when it cannot punish those who violate, it can still punish those who impugn these principles. For they may be violated in private, but they must be impugned in public. Thus the State cannot punish a lie, but it could punish a writer who seriously recommended consistent lying. In punishing him it would be supported by the conscience of mankind. The possibility that a moral innovator

may have conscientious motives is a reason for treating him with all lenity; and the possibility that he may teach a much better and purer morality than already prevails is a reason for allowing a very wide latitude of discussion upon morals; but neither of these possibilities affects the principle above laid down. On principle, the State is the guardian of the prevailing morality.

We cannot shrink from the logical consequences of this principle, and we must see how far they extend. All discussion of political or religious questions may lead men to practical moral conclusions. If it be serious it certainly will do so. These conclusions may be of the most momentous character. Thus an economic controversy may lead able men to suppose that private property in land is an enormous iniquity. Thereupon they will naturally agitate against private property in land. Again, a sect may believe that certain persons have authority to mediate between the rest of their kind and God. As these persons are never quite inaccessible to private inducements, a belief like this may affect, and always does affect, popular morality. Another sect may believe in justification by faith alone. The enthusiasts of such sects have often been persuaded that they were released from all restraint of moral law, and they have sometimes acted upon that persuasion. If, then, it should appear that a conscientious objection to private property in land—a conscientious belief in the efficacy of indulgences or in the doctrine of justification—tends to subvert accepted moral ideas, the conclusion follows that in the abstract the State is justified in forbidding anybody to preach such doctrine. What prudence requires it to do is quite another thing.

But the same principle applies to discussion of a more speculative kind. For serious opinion upon any great subject modifies serious opinion upon all great subjects. Political, and religious thought bear most directly upon practice ; but every new idea bears upon them. Everybody knows that the system of Copernicus has influenced the religion of all thinking men. The doctrine of evolution has transformed our ideas of politics as well as of religion. Science every day exerts a greater pressure upon life. Every day each science is brought into closer connection with all the rest. As we become more civilized, we become more critical. We are constrained to piece together the scattered fragments of our thought. We must amend practice by means of theory, and verify theory by means of practice. Consistency is to us indispensable. Whether or not men knew it, there was always unity in their thought ; but we want to feel the unity of ours. Thus every new idea exerts a more and more instant influence upon all other ideas. And all ideas demand more and more imperiously that we shall act upon them. In a word, men grow more and more sensitive to ideas. Ideas more and more mould practical life. So that the preacher of new ideas is more powerful than ever before. What he says is more than at any former time a matter of supreme interest to society.

He who earnestly adopts an idea must attempt to realize it. If two men attempt to realize contrary ideas, they must come in conflict. If they have embraced these ideas with the fervour which great ideas naturally inspire, their conflict will become a death-struggle. The wars and persecutions formerly inspired by religious animosity were really inevitable. Their brutality was the accident of their age. Wars



not less terrible and persecutions equally unrelenting may be occasioned by anything which interests men as strongly as theology interested our forefathers of the sixteenth century. That such wars and persecutions are no longer frequent is due much more to the lassitude and indifference than to the self-control and intelligence of the multitude.

At the present day, although everybody has opinions, few have beliefs. But wherever you can find enthusiasm, there you will also find the resolution to remodel society. The Ultramontanes in the Latin States, the Nonconformists among ourselves, and the Socialists everywhere would legislate for everybody upon their own peculiar principles. We may wish now and then that each of these great parties had canvassed its principles a little more thoroughly. But to complain of any one for acting upon its own principles is weak and womanish. On what else should it act? Or should it not act at all?

Every great revolution in practice has grown out of a great revolution in belief. Revolutions in belief in the first instance are brought about by means of persuasion; but revolutions in practice are very largely the result of pressure applied by those who believe in something to those who believe in nothing. The minority of believers has never shrunk from coercing the majority of sceptics. Indeed, they had no alternative; for the greater part of mankind, deaf to argument and eloquence, are always enslaved to the powers of impulse, imitation, or interest. Thus did a Christian minority force a world into the religion of charity. Thus did a handful of martial Independents force England into republicanism. These men, their leaders, and their teachers constrained society to obey their law.

Society opposed them in arms. They conquered society because they alone had a clear conception of what they wanted, and were fully resolved to secure it. They had power over the real because they were possessed by the ideal. How, then, can we say that he who preaches an ideal has nothing to do with the State, the State no business to interfere with him?

Yes, it may be said, the expression of thought must forcibly react upon society, but the expression of thought is always favourable to our thinking aright. Without unlimited freedom of discussion we cannot acquire new truths. Even among beliefs which may be called true, few are adequate to the whole truth, and those which are most true come in process of time to lose more and more of their meaning, so that the truths most universally acknowledged and most often repeated are those which influence men least. Therefore we must continue to call in question old certainties as well as new probabilities; otherwise we shall relax our grasp of the old truths whilst we are seizing upon new.

A theory something like this was enforced by Mr. Mill in his book on Liberty. It contains a truth which we must not undervalue, but it is very far from containing the whole truth. In particular it overlooks, I think, the importance of the following considerations.

In the first place, the body of clear, well-ascertained, and demonstrable truth is ever growing. Truth of this kind, scientific truth, neither loses nor gains by discussion. It does not lose by discussion, for it remains the same, however long discussed; it does not gain by discussion because its proof is complete. Each successive generation of students retraces Euclid's demonstrations of geometric truth, and

finds them as fresh and as convincing as they were to their first discoverer. Here conviction rests on the completeness of the proof in itself, not upon a comparison of the proof with other arguments leading to other conclusions. Men, therefore, cease to discuss truths like these; discussion in such cases would be a solemn absurdity.

In the second place, the body of truth which is clear and well-ascertained, but not demonstrable, the body of practical truth, grows also, although it grows slowly. This seems to have been the kind of truth most present to Mr. Mill's mind when he formed his theory of liberty. And in so far as affected by discussion, practical maxims and scientific principles do stand upon quite a different footing. No length of repetition can dull the brightness, no acid of discussion can eat away the substance of speculative truth. But practical truth, at first possessed as insight, may come to be worn as a habit or muttered as a formula. Men may inherit the body of such truth, but they themselves must make it live. Discussion, serious, honest, and unshrinking discussion may well be one means of imparting this life, and deserves to be valued almost as highly as it was valued by Mr. Mill. But practical truth, as compared with scientific truth, has not only more to gain, but also more to lose by discussion.

If we were purely rational beings, it would be enough for us to see that a practical maxim is true. But since we are half-rational, half-irrational, another and a harder task remains, to impose the practical maxim upon our irrational nature. And since our irrational nature, like the nature of animals and plants, can be modified only by circumstance, we must by use and wont subject it to the sway of truth. Before a maxim can control our life, it must cease to be a

maxim merely, it must become a truism, a habit, a prejudice. Before it can gain sufficient strength, it must lose something of abstract purity. No doubt a time often comes when the habit is broken up by harsh experience and the prejudice can no longer withstand the stress of new facts. That is the time of moral and social revolution, when the naked, shivering conscience is turned out of its old home to find elsewhere raiment and shelter. But the habit and the prejudice which have made the revolution necessary have also made the revolution possible. Men, since they are not gods, must rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves.

From the very fact that all practical truths are fruitful only in so far as they are worked out in the refractory material of nature, of our passions and our circumstances, and that they can be worked out only by a process, long, laborious, and painful, it results that there is a real danger in the altogether unlimited canvassing of such truth. Even a sound principle suffers by such canvassing. If we discuss it too long, we make familiar to our impulses the thought of gratification to be had by disregarding it. When we have once poised our reason in impartial balance between several courses of life, we are pretty sure to pursue the course which to our instincts promises to be most agreeable. Or if we disdain to live merely for enjoyment, if we see clearly what is good and true, yet oftentimes benumbed by repeated shocks, we lose a firm grasp upon the principle which we discern, and wearily accept one after another the ignoble maxims of the world, growing more enslaved to convention or to caprice than if we had never questioned our first and crudest prejudice.

Our best chance of improving ourselves or others lies not

so much in discovering maxims altogether new as in raising practice to the level of maxims which we already know. The first principles of a good life have been possessed for a much longer space of time and by far more persons than the first principles of mechanics or of chemistry; but men act always upon known principles of mechanics or chemistry, and seldom upon known principles of morality. The principles of right action are developed, tested, and defined by actions. To mere logical discussion they owe little. It is quite true that even if we honestly follow the best light which we can get we shall not avoid errors or be secure against doing a great deal of harm, but we shall do less harm than if we gave way to a bottomless moral scepticism, and we shall be more likely to amend our errors than if we wavered to and fro or sat down and did nothing.

The complex nature of practical truth makes it at once more easy and more difficult than scientific truth. How far morality is advanced by a constant canvassing of moral questions is a problem which can be solved only by mature good sense. Some limit good sense has always imposed upon such canvassing. Children cannot be educated without learning to obey many moral laws which they do not criticize and cannot appreciate. Nor is this necessity created merely by their want of reason. Children develop an abstract logical faculty at a very early age. Aristotle has said that the young are capable of mathematics long before they are capable of morality, because mathematics and morality demand very different degrees of experience. But children have no chance of exercising their impartial judgment upon moral questions unless prejudice be artfully employed to counterpoise passion. Convinced as we are

that virtue alone is reasonable, we use every means to bias the child in favour of virtue. We assume that we must form the character before we explain the principle. I need not observe how all this differs from our modes of teaching chemistry or mathematics.

Again, the judicious man freely submits himself to the law which the teacher imposes on the child. Satisfied that the practice approved by his fellows embodies a great deal of wisdom, he puts a certain curb on his own dialectic. He does this not merely out of a selfishness which apes the habits of the majority, or a timidity which shrinks from the use of its own reason. He does not doubt his reason, but he dreads his inclinations. He plays off the spirit of routine against the spirit of lawlessness. His reflection upon life and conduct finds full scope in the ever widening field of duty which opens upon every one who really tries to be good. He has neither time nor inclination to ask whether the family and the State, honesty and public spirit are not after all illusions.

Until we have done with questioning we cannot act. When we have begun to act we feel little disposed to question. If our principle of action is altogether wrong, experience soon proves it to be such. If our principle is in the main right, it is too valuable to be easily let go. In either case action ends doubt. Practical maxims can be verified or refuted by action only. They are not indeed irrational, but their subject matter is so complex that in order to be correct they must condense within their brief terms a thousand unexpressed considerations. Only a master of ethics can state them in really precise and explicit language. He alone can put them into a demonstrable form. And after

all he does little more than clothe in scientific garb the vulgar experience of mankind.

Law and public opinion may often err, have often erred, in forbidding the public questioning of certain moral rules. But cases may arise in which their interference would be approved by the sincerest friends of liberty and of reason. Suppose it were honestly proposed to abolish marriage and replace it by general prostitution. Proposals hardly less surprising have been made in good faith by very clever men. If men agreed in forbidding the discussion of such a proposal, it would not be because they were sceptical of the benefits of chastity, nor yet because they thought the proposal likely to be accepted. They would simply say that they had every reason to think it absurd, and every reason to believe that its investigation would quicken into livelier ferment all the incalculable pruriency of the general public. They would be quite right in saying so. Discussions of this kind do reason no good and morality much harm. A great deal of idle and mischievous talk we must tolerate in the interest of free thought, but we cannot forget that there are other interests equally sacred.

A reader may here interrupt and say, "After all, what is the use of suggesting these vague restraints upon freedom of discussion? To all intents and purposes discussion is now free and always will remain free. The few attempts recently made to suppress publications deemed offensive or immoral have had no other effect than to circulate more widely the very writings which they were directed to extinguish. The printing-press will always frustrate the vigilance and severity of the most powerful government."

I fully admit the force of this objection. But although

the politician may be content with knowing what ought to be done, the student of politics will always want to know why it ought to be done. I accept the practical conclusion that the State cannot really do much in this matter. The speculative reasons for this conclusion seem to me often vague and unsound. Moreover, a great deal which law cannot do may be done by public opinion. And although the State cannot effectually suppress error, it may, by education form such a character and such an intelligence as seem most desirable. In this way society can influence thought. But the argument so often adduced in favour of the largest licence of discussion would serve to show that the State has no concern with education.

Those who refuse to coerce the teachers of any doctrine whatsoever on the grounds that all coercion is bad for individual character, ought to bear in mind that when we train a child to act upon a certain rule of conduct we impair individual freedom no less than when we punish those who would impress the opposite rule of conduct upon the man. And indeed Mr. Mill and Mr. Herbert Spencer are quite consistent in this matter. Mr. Mill disliked, and Mr. Spencer abominates all education by the State. But those who think that all functions of the State may ultimately be resolved into the function of educating the citizen are bound to say why the State leaves discussion to take its own course.

For our actual licence of speech there are many sufficient reasons; some drawn from the present posture of affairs, some from circumstances of universal occurrence. The adherents of conflicting beliefs may be so balanced in power that none can persecute the rest. Or in respect of all



questions that profoundly concern the estate of man, there may be such a pervading scepticism that the last sign of conviction, the wish to torment those who differ from you, is almost dead. Modern Europe will supply many instances in both kinds. Or it may be found wise to let men talk, because much passion is exhausted by the simple process of talking. Every time we utter a belief it loses its strength. Or it may be that the majority can find no device subtle enough to prevent the minority from saying what they think.

But the consideration which has the most enduring weight is the weakness of our capacity for truth. So much is doubtful, so much is altogether unknown; so indolent, so timid, so careless of truth, are the mass of men; so ill-situated and so ill-provided for knowing what is true are the rulers of every state, that the public cannot be too wary in committing to a government, a government cannot be too lenient in exercising, any control over the expression and diffusion of ideas. And what holds good of governments, holds good also, although in a less degree, of public opinion.

Again, society, whether operating through law or through public opinion, can employ against ideas deemed pernicious only a coercion more or less refined. In the sphere of thought, coercion, even if employed on the right side, is usually subject to the vice of defeating its own purpose. The object of all who wish well to their kind is to promote serious thought; and serious thought is always a vital process. It is a growth, not an acquisition. What we believe is not more important than the way in which we came to believe it. They are only two aspects of the same thing. As is the

process, so is the product. It is practically impossible to coerce thought without making a people either frivolous or fanatical, that is to say, thoughtless. So that even if governments were ideally wise, they would still do most wisely never to punish or reward the expression of thought, save under the most urgent pressure of public order or of public decency.

In every case we must balance the advantages against the disadvantages of unlimited freedom of speech. The general presumption is against meddling with such freedom ; but innumerable circumstances may affect the strength of this presumption. The general of an army in imminent peril may be justified in visiting with heavy penalties all who criticize his dispositions. The sovereign of a kingdom torn by the fury of contending creeds, may fairly forbid to any one sect such public ceremonies as would inflame the madness of the rest. He may fairly prohibit all public discussion of exciting topics. If the rulers of India in the nineteenth, or of England in the sixteenth century had left fanatics free to express their opinions as they pleased, all peace and security would have been at an end. And in all ages and countries, discourse which directly incites men to violate either the law, or those moral rules which are as definite, as well established, and as necessary to the cohesion of civil society as the rules of law itself, may be a very proper object of severe correction.

In this, even more than in other spheres of social life, the true check upon abstractions is the opinion of a very enlightened public. An enlightened public will always love thought too well to tolerate unreasonable restraints upon thinking. And our natural scorn for the petty average of

intelligence should not blind us to the fact that the interference of society with discussion may be not unfriendly to the interests of conduct. For the standard adopted by the conscience of the community is very different from the rule embodied in the practice of each of its members.

Instances, no doubt, occur in which the ideas of the individual are nobler than the ideas of the society. In such cases must society incur the risk and guilt of trying to extinguish what is good. Must the individual suffer for trying to confer upon mankind the greatest of blessings? This is a hard question; but we must face it fairly. It has presented itself before; it will present itself again. In all such cases I think that the issue must be tragical. If men are attached to no system of beliefs or of institutions, they are sure to be flabby and nerveless. If they are attached to some such system, they must feel alarm and indignation when it is assailed; and they must needs dislike its assailant. Feelings like these need not overpower reason; but they must embitter the life of their object. He, if he is good for anything, will not be content to rest in a speculative difference. He will make war upon that which exists, and it will defend itself against him.

It matters not in principle whether it is by law or by public opinion that this armed resistance is offered to the reformer. In either case he suffers for fulfilling his most sacred duty; and those who make him suffer may be doing their duty too. Without accepting the cynical doctrine that persecution is the test of truth, we cannot help seeing that persecution is the sure reward of those who love the truth above all things. The sure reward not merely because men are blind and rancorous, but because men cannot dissociate

thought from life. That the best men should be called upon to suffer most, is a riddle which may perplex those philosophers who still hold that the path of exalted virtue is a path of flowers. I do not know why it should perplex anybody else. The whole of life is filled with conflict; with conflict which in our sadder, wiser hours seems a conflict about the veriest trifles. The whole of life is a misunderstanding; a misunderstanding of ourselves and of our circumstances; of our neighbours and of the world. Why should we wonder that the greatest men, the men most truly human, have rather more than their share of misunderstanding and conflict? Rather let us think them blessed in that they struggle for a reality, and, not like the rest of us, for a shadow; blessed in that they are misunderstood because they are too noble and too pure for the utmost stretch of vulgar conception.

It is not easy to see how the life of great teachers can ever be a happy life. Nevertheless, we have attained to the understanding of a principle which does in some sort mitigate the internecine war between old and new ideas of morals and society. This principle we may describe as the principle of the evolution of thought. Whatever our ancestors held to be true, they held to contain the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Whatever they rejected, they rejected as altogether false, wantonly, wilfully and damnably false. We no longer look upon our truth as perfect truth. Perfect truth we regard as something beyond the reach of any generation. The beliefs which we do not accept we regard as but partially false. They are approximations, ruder, we think, than our own, but approximations still. And we have come to see that ideas which we esteem mon-

strous and incredible have been our point of departure in the pursuit of ideas which we now prize very highly, although we know that our posterity will lay them aside as we have laid aside the ideas of our forefathers. This frame of mind is not scepticism. It is the very opposite of scepticism; for it respects all manifestations of reason. It sees a growth in that which seemed to be repetition. It finds a unity in that which seemed to be confusion. It lends a meaning to the first endeavours, it sobers the latest triumphs of intelligence. It shows that every failure of thought is no more a failure than it is a victory. It reconciles progress with continuity, tradition with revolution, the authority of society with the independence of private judgment. It applies to our inward spiritual as to our outward visible life the idea of evolution.

The modern reformer if serious will be the first to confess that he owes to the past the very principles which he hopes to develop in the future. He looks upon himself as continuing the labours of his ancestors as he hopes that posterity will continue his own. As against those who oppose all change he will assert that he has appropriated the experience, not of one age or country, but of all. He will say that he has interpreted history in the spirit, not of a partizan, but of a thinker. He will maintain that he continues the evolution of history. And from this new conception of his work he will derive a new spirit of forbearance and moderation. He sees better than any of his predecessors how little the highest intelligence and the most heroic will can effect; and he is conscious that they have been formed and matured by that very society which in their light appears disorganized and vicious. He esteems his private judgment, not an

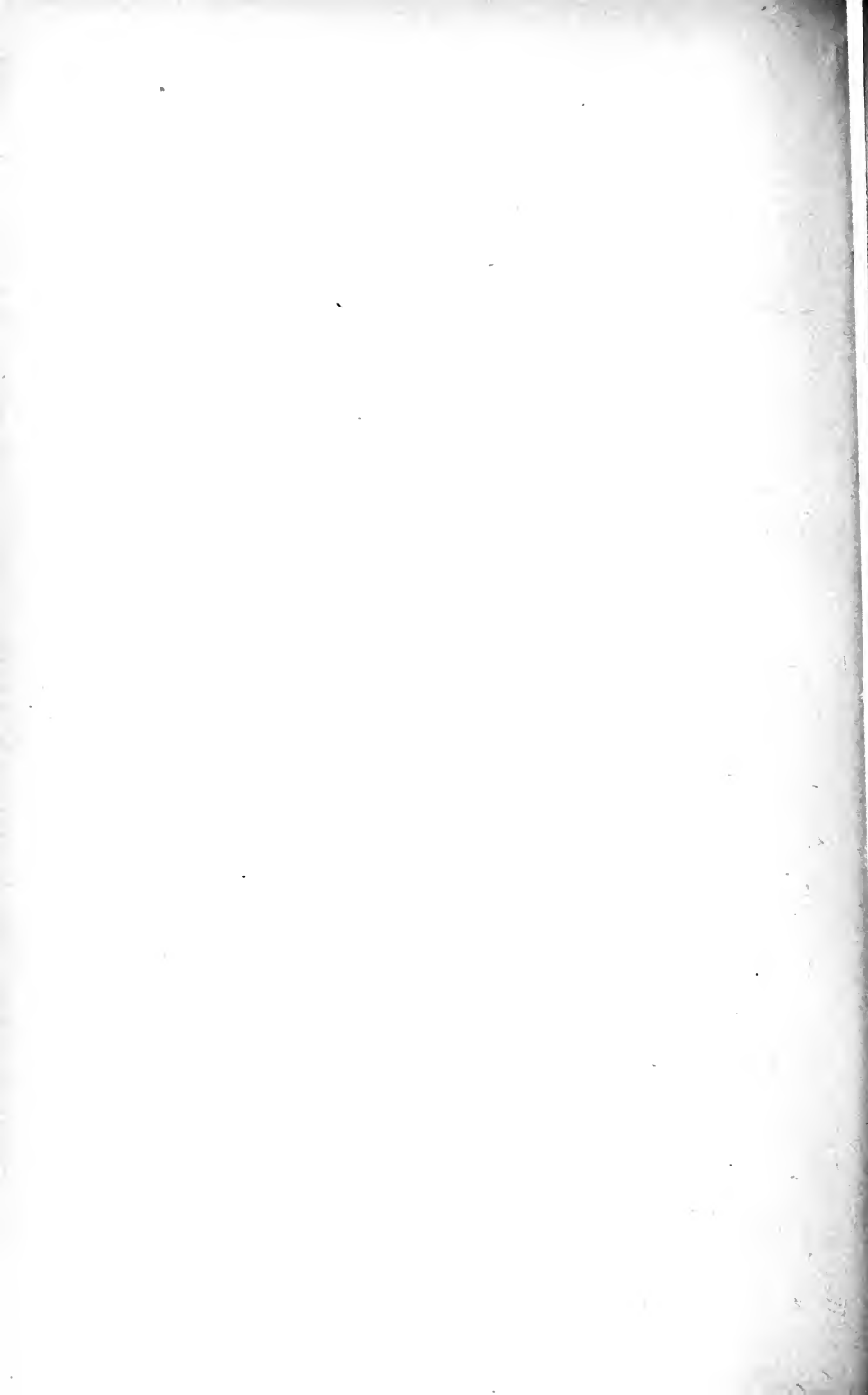
inspired and infallible guide, but an epitome of the wisdom of former ages. Instead of overbearing his fellows by a rule of action which they do not recognize, he shames them by an appeal to their own conscience.

And as it is with the reformer, so is it with the public whom he addresses. They may dislike his projects, they may suspect his motives, but they must debate the case upon its merits. For they too must confess that out of the numberless heresies of the past their present orthodoxy has arisen. They see that their own orthodoxy was once an innovation and may come to be a relic. It is but a relative orthodoxy. It too will pass, and they cannot say for certain what will succeed it. Thus forced to abandon dogmatism, they must be content to cling to honesty of purpose and scientific method. They must appeal to general historic principles. As the reformer claims that his reforms are but a further development of such principles, it is by reference to such principles that the public must test them.

Even then the matter is not easy. The controversy is not without bitterness. But it is no longer hopeless. For the combatants have something in common. They have a canon of truth, accepted by both parties. They can appeal to an authority which all enlightened men regard as final. And thus they always have a chance of reaching a composition. Their warfare is not to the knife; it is an honourable conflict which may be concluded by an honourable peace. Formerly earnest men had no such resource. Men assured that a moral, political, or religious principle was of infinite consequence must needs come to deadly conflict with men who held the very same principle to be an invention of the devil.

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If the progress of civilization has abated the bitterness of factious strife and blunted the edge of remorseless persecution, it has effected this happy result, not by weakening the hold of truth upon the mind of man, not by divorcing thought from action, not by rendering indifferent to society the beliefs and feelings of the individual, or by narrowing the action of the State to the control of bodies as distinguished from souls. No, it has mitigated the warfare of opinion by making it possible for men to understand one another. We hate only that which we cannot understand. A lasting tolerance is based, not on scepticism, but on faith. Faith in reason, reverence for reason enable us to maintain what we deem the cause of truth, without forgetting the duty of charity. They support us when our good cause is for the moment overborne by force or chance; and they prepare us to acquiesce in the final defeat of that cause if it be not really good.





VIII.

*BUREAUCRACY AND  
COMMUNISM.*



## VIII.

### *BUREAUCRACY AND COMMUNISM.*

NOTHING more augments our national jealousy of an enlarged State action than the very general belief that such action conducts us through bureaucracy to communism. Bureaucracy and communism are, perhaps, terms more frequent in use than exact in definition. All government is a substitute for self-help, and all taxation is an invasion of private property. But for practical purposes we may term that a bureaucratic administration which undertakes tasks capable of being as well or better performed by private individuals. And we may call that a communistic administration which taxes individuals in order to raise the means wherewith to perform such tasks. In this sense communism is the counterpart of bureaucracy; and indeed we find that in many countries the communistic zeal of reformers is measured by the bureaucratic energy of the government.

Thus if we conceive the State to have functions of real dignity and importance, we are bound to show that our doctrine does not involve bureaucracy or communism as a practical corollary. We ought to show that the bureaucracy and the communism of modern Europe have received from special historical causes their present peculiar character. We ought to show that society can act in its corporate character without becoming bureaucratic. And we ought

to indicate as well as we can the limit to the demands which the State may wisely and fairly make upon the purse of the citizen.

Bureaucratic government as it exists in France or Germany is not perhaps the intense and unmixed evil which we sometimes take it to be. The administration of those countries can show some great public benefits to counterpoise great public burthens. The discontented of those countries, it has been well said, whilst often expressing esteem for particular English ideas or institutions, never own to a preference for English life as a whole. Much of the narrowness, the monotony and the dreariness of English life comes of our inveterate individualism. Much of the fulness, the variety, and the excitement of Continental life is due to a restless paternal government. But let us take Continental bureaucracy at the estimate of its accusers. Let us allow that it blights individual energy, withers the power of voluntary combination, diffuses throughout whole nations a senile temper at once helpless and exacting; still we may insist that it is the special result of special conditions, not a logical result of our political theory, nor a probable result of the present course of politics in our own country.

In the first place, then, the administrative system of the nations of the Continent was created, not by the people, but by dynasties. It was directed to secure, firstly, the power of the government, and, secondly, the welfare of the subject. The people usually acquiesced in bureaucracy and sometimes favoured it because the bureaucratic was much more tolerable than the feudal tyranny. Under the feudal, as under the bureaucratic system, the peasart had been oppressed.

To fight and to pay taxes; these had been and these remained his most important rights. But the bureaucratic system, if it did not lighten his burthens, gave him some compensation, gave him at least a well-regulated servitude, gave him security against everybody except his rulers, gave him a sense of national unity and opened up to him a larger sphere of thought and action than he had ever known before. Thus bureaucracy became popular in all the great states of Europe, and survived shocks under which almost every other institution had perished. For the people, whilst they wished to be well governed, had long lost the power and even the inclination to govern.

Having grown up in this manner, the bureaucracy shared the sanctity of the sovereign. It was not at all subject to popular control, and hardly at all exposed to popular criticism. It was centralized to the last degree. For it had grown with the growing absorption of all inferior and intermediate powers by the monarchy. In the despotic States of modern Europe the central authority tended to become the only authority. And the bureaucracy of such States as France or Austria grew up under a martial despotism. In their struggle with feudalism, sovereigns had developed standing armies side by side with bureaucracies. Under the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Romanoffs, the military was the most honourable of all professions, and military ideas had penetrated into every department of administration. The civil took the complexion of the military service, and borrowed thence the principle of a blind, unquestioning obedience to one distant and irrespon-

sible authority whose approval implied power and wealth, whilst its censure carried disgrace and ruin.

Bureaucracies thus developed by despots for the purposes of despotism, and under the inspiration of the military spirit, could not fail to display the vices sometimes imputed to all skilled administrations. By a logical and necessary process those who had been the instruments of tyranny became the tyrants. Modern society is so vast and so complex as to elude the grasp of a single master. Its daily regulation is too irksome and monotonous a task for the most active and skilful man of business. But emperors and kings are seldom endowed with much administrative skill or much administrative activity. For the most part their youth is consumed in pleasure, their maturer years are frittered away in formality. They serve many purposes of sentiment and imagination ; they are living, visible, and splendid objects of love and hate ; they serve for historic memorials and for national symbols ; but whenever they employ a bureaucracy, a bureaucracy governs them. In all the great monarchies of the Continent the administrative corporation rules ; but it rules without responsibility and without glory.

Corporations of this kind tend to become as narrow as they are powerful. Their members, great in the greatness of the corporation, are in themselves nothing. Each individual can operate, not in his own character, but only as a portion of the huge machine. Thus in a bureaucracy patriotism too often gives way to the spirit of the corps. A bureaucracy almost invariably lacks flexibility, sympathy, large views, the power of pursuing the same end with every variety of means. It always is unable to leave well alone. Fond of power, yet enslaved by routine, it breaks down

in the attempt to regulate and methodize even in the least particular the mobile, varying, and expanding life of a modern nation. A modern nation can be governed only by the nation itself.

Such I take to be the failings commonly imputed to bureaucratic government. I have endeavoured to state them in the strongest possible way. It is manifest that these failings come of the peculiar history of Continental bureaucracy, rather than of anything innate in administration by experts. And the historical conditions of Continental bureaucracy cannot be found in our own country. If we create an administrative machine, we shall create it to supply wants of our own, wants which we clearly understand. It will not resemble the administrative machine created by a dynasty in order to fortify and enlarge its own power. And we shall take care to keep in our own hands such checking and controlling powers as no despot on the Continent can retain. A bureaucracy accountable only to the sovereign or to a minister, differs altogether from a public service controlled at every turn by the Imperial Parliament, by the courts of justice and by the public press. For reputation all our higher public servants look to the public press, and for reward to the Imperial Parliament. They are on all occasions liable to appear before judges who are neither civil servants nor ministers of State, whose tradition is one of equal justice, and whose bias is to enlarge their own jurisdiction. All these circumstances are peculiar to our own country, and all afford guarantees against bureaucratic tyranny.

In the second place, we have ancient and effective municipal liberties. In most parts of the Continent of Europe all

such have long since withered away. In mediæval France the peasants had scarcely known, and the burghers were not strong enough to guard, local independence and self-government. The civic liberties of Germany were weakened in the Thirty Years' War, and annihilated by the crushing military force of her sovereigns. The Russian village community is too primitive an organization, the Russian peasant is too little removed from barbarism, not to be easily overborne by a systematic central administration. But here in England it is otherwise. Unequally developed and ill-organized as our local institutions may be, they are still a reality. And in strengthening and perfecting these we shall find a counterpoise to the weight of an immense civil service.

When a great number of citizens partake in the business of government, when these citizens live in a constant commerce of ideas with the rest, are chosen by them, act in their eye, and after rendering an account to them return to mingle in their ranks, then you have an administration too much in unity with the people to tyrannize over it. As a military despotism may be made impossible by identifying the army with the nation, so a bureaucratic despotism may be made impossible by identifying the administration with the community. Such an administration makes up in freedom from routine what it wants in technical dexterity. What it wants in perseverance it compensates in energy. The close and intimate connection created by it between those who administer and those whose affairs are administered, ensures that stability which so often underlies the turbulent surface of republican society. For by the alternate experience of ruling and being ruled men best learn how much governments can do for them and how much



they must do for themselves. They acquire that habit of temperate criticism which at once preserves and renews institutions. A term of office is commonly the best sedative for the revolutionary fever.

Elective and responsible municipal bodies, it is true, are quite capable of corruption. They may become as corrupt as the worst bureaucracy. In point of administrative impurity some parts of the United States could challenge comparison with Russia. Only an intelligent and inquisitive public opinion can ensure administrative purity, and this public opinion can operate only upon something conspicuous and interesting. Administrative bodies, therefore, should not be more numerous than their duties really require. In England at the present day they are so many, their constitutions are so various, their powers are so fragmentary and conflicting, that not one citizen in ten can accurately enumerate the several authorities which administer his municipal business, and not one citizen in a hundred can say whether they administer it well or ill. Public opinion, all powerful upon the Imperial Parliament, exercises no influence upon subordinate assemblies. A Board of Guardians, or a Local Board is virtually as irresponsible as any servant of a centralized bureaucracy. For its members there is neither praise nor blame, neither gratitude or unpopularity. Able and ambitious men will seldom serve upon such a board. But indifference, incompetence, jobbery, and extravagance are very likely to sit there. ✓

If we would ensure the honesty, industry, and public spirit of elective and unpaid officers, we must make their station honourable, their duties important, their present power and their prospect of promotion considerable. Within

each of the areas now comprised in a single Poor Law Union there should be one local authority and no more. This authority should discharge all the functions now parcelled out among the six or seven authorities who divide the administration of such an area. Within each county there should be a real county authority, entrusted not only with the control of county roads, county prisons and asylums, but also with a large share of the supervising, admonishing, and controlling power now centred in Whitehall, and of the power of private legislation now centred in the Houses of Parliament. Immense would be the relief thus given to the imperial executive and legislature. But more momentous still would be the impulse given to provincial public life. Local politics, once more important, would once more be interesting; men of talent would once more be willing to serve upon local bodies; local bodies would once more be braced by local criticism; and a wave of administrative energy and public spirit would pass over the whole kingdom.

But the renovation of municipal institutions will not alone meet the administrative demands of modern society. Federal government seems destined to play in the future a part which it has never filled in the past. Centralized monarchies have nearly done their work. The great nations have been fully consolidated. The joint European civilization has become palpable. Whilst each society continues to expand, each individual claims more and more attention. One legislature and one executive are not equal to the wants of thirty or forty millions. In our own country the House of Commons is bewildered by its own power. Not content with legislating, it undertakes to control in every

petty detail the administration of the law. If a steamer runs down a fishing-boat, if a schoolboy is flogged unduly, if a justice of the peace makes use of some strong expression, half a dozen honourable members are eager to put questions and to raise a debate. And as it is with the House of Commons here, so it is with the sovereign power in France, in Germany, in almost all modern States. In each the sovereign power, having absorbed all minor powers, is breaking down under its own omnipotence.

Modern States are on the one hand too large, on the other too small. They are too large for good internal administration, and too small to ensure a general peace. On the one hand a federation of all civilized peoples; on the other a federation of the constituent members of each people; this would seem the happiest goal of political development. But federation can succeed only where the confederate States are parts of a thoroughly homogeneous people. Federation only supplies organization and arms to distinct and unfriendly communities hitherto subjected to one sovereignty. ✓

If the people have knowledge and public spirit, the more powerful the administration, the more it can do good it will do. The more a citizen can do for himself, the more a public authority can do for him. For the administration and the people are not two naturally hostile powers, the one gaining only that which is lost to the other. The administrative system is merely the organization of the people for certain purposes of public good, and the more complete each citizen becomes, the more complete will be the organization. If the people are so ignorant and incapable that they cannot, or so selfish and indolent that they will not control the

administration of their own affairs, then the administration will better the example of their weakness or their baseness. So exactly is the worth of a nation measured by the worth of its servants. So completely does the improvement of institutions run upon a circle with the improvement of men. So helpless apart from human life is the machine which multiplies human strength. No cunning contrivance of boards and inspectors, no artful balancing of checks and powers, no system of elections primary and secondary, no freedom of unlicensed printing and speaking can ever replace that first requisite of a good government—character and intelligence, real sterling worth in those who are to be governed. Because it is so hard to get a nation of real men, it is so hard to get a really useful administrative system. But we must not accept as natural and necessary the vices of any existing administration. Only weak politicians acquiesce in the alternative of evils. The true statesman, in the face of discouragement and defeat, persists in believing that all good things tend to aid and to foster one another. He knows how inherently deceitful is abstract perfection; how delusive is abstract regularity, or abstract strength or abstract freedom; he does not imagine freedom, strength, or regularity can be achieved by caring for any one of them apart from all the rest; but rather feels that he can secure any one of them only in so far as he has secured the others. He will not confess that municipal independence must exclude national unity, or that the liberty of the individual is hostile to the efficiency of the government.

Again, those who advocate a large conception of the duties of the State are said to advocate, not only bureaucracy,

but communism as well. Bureaucratic government does indeed stimulate all tendencies to communism ; and this in two ways, firstly by entailing immense expenditure and heavy taxation, and secondly by accustoming people to rely for the satisfaction of all their wants, not upon their own efforts, but upon the paternal care of their government. But as we have tried to show that an active and enterprising administration need not involve anything known as bureaucracy, so we shall now try to distinguish from communism a large public expenditure upon the education of the individual. We shall try to fix the limit at which, upon our theory, taxation passes into confiscation. At the present day it is of the utmost consequence that this limit should be clearly and certainly defined. Towards fixing it we can here only offer one or two considerations.

In principle there is no limit to the proportion of private wealth which may be diverted to public purposes. In practice, cases may arise in which society must enforce this extreme right to dispose of individual resources. There need not be anything harsh or unreasonable in such a policy. The life of every citizen is more sacred than his property, yet every citizen holds his life subject to the exigencies of public defence and of public justice. But whilst all sensible men acknowledge this primary and indefeasible lien of the community upon each member's purse, they differ very widely as to the best way of enforcing it, or the degree in which it ought to be enforced at all.

Thus political economists, in their zeal against indirect taxation, have sometimes forgotten that certain indirect taxes may be commended upon moral or social grounds.

A heavy customs or excise duty imposed upon tobacco or spirituous liquors does not really interfere with their moderate use, although it imposes a penalty upon their gross abuse. Such taxation acts as a sumptuary law without the attending evils of petty tyranny and ceaseless interference. On this ground it seems preferable to a direct taxation, which must always divert a certain amount of wealth from reproductive uses. Again, carriages, male domestic servants, and plate are for the most part luxuries, contrivances for consuming food or for locking up capital. Heavy taxes upon such articles, without impoverishing any one, would conduce to simplicity of life. And everything which conduces to simplicity of life is to be prized in a country like our own, where every class is in its own degree rich and improvident. It is our singular fortune, good or bad, that we can raise an immense revenue out of impositions upon articles which owe all their value to the coarser appetites. Why should any man trouble himself to transfer this revenue from the coffers of the State into the pockets of the purveyors of luxury?

Again, the earlier economists were prone to treat with too much tenderness, whilst recent philanthropists have been prone to deal too harshly with the spirit of accumulation. The impulse to accumulate is neither a moral nor an immoral, but a purely natural impulse. As such it deserves neither absolute reverence nor absolute contempt. It would be very unreasonable to speak of the desire for accumulation as if it were in itself a precious or a beautiful thing, as if it must always and in all degrees be a good thing, as if, under any circumstances whatsoever, we could never have too much of it. Yet the instinct for accumulation is a

motive superior in some ways to other unthinking instincts. It is a far-sighted desire which enables men to master their passing fancies and to form the habit of self-control. The great majority of men are, and always will be non-moral. That is to say, reason will be able to sway their actions only by playing off one unreasoning appetite against another. Our friends the Socialists are apt to overlook this unpleasant truth, and so to undervalue the desire of accumulation. For this desire is but the artificial form of the natural passion for life. It is simply the civilized instinct of self-preservation. In the present posture of human affairs, with the present dispositions of men's minds, to hope that the State can be rich if the citizen does not care for riches, is merely to affirm the truth of two contradictories.

Moreover, the impulse to accumulate is of very variable strength. There is great reason to think that we are entering upon an epoch in which the desire of accumulation will become little less than a frenzy. It grows with the lasting tendency of civilization to make men more prudent, and with the present tendency of civilization to make men more selfish. Life daily becomes more difficult to maintain. The means of making it more easy, a limiting of our numbers and a reform in our manners, will not be tried until every other remedy has been tried in vain. So long as it is difficult to live, there will be a struggle for the means of living. So long as men are insatiable of pleasure, they will be insatiable of the means of pleasing themselves. Thus it is quite conceivable that the spirit of accumulation, elsewhere all too weak, may in our crowded Western Europe become so unruly as to need repression rather than encouragement. In these countries, where accumulation has become a habit,

a necessity, a fanaticism, the government may appropriate a very considerable share of private fortunes without any fear of destroying the appetite for wealth.

Upon the same principle we may justify a scheme of graduated taxation. As the poor need a long time to make even small savings, and can hardly hope to make such savings as will give them ease, the poor are generally prone to present pleasure and little disposed to save. But as the rich can save a large sum in a short time, can save it without pain, and can see the social effect of their saving, they are inclined to think, not less of the present, but more of the future. Thus the spirit of accumulation is stronger in the rich than in the poor, and therefore it is safe to tax the rich in a heavier proportion. For rich men devoid of this spirit, there are so many opportunities and temptations to spend, that much of their wealth would in any case be wasted, and they can meet a heavier taxation by a stricter prudence.

I can discover no valid objection to a graduated succession duty or to a graduated income-tax. But it seems to me that in imposing taxes we should consider only the necessities of the State and the abilities of the citizen. Let us beware how we lose sight of the landmarks of justice in a fog of sophistry, yield up our ears to the jargon of unearned increments, or surrender our understandings to the metaphysic of proscription, of spoliation, and of nationalization. We have seen clever men propose, and a great part of the populace accept a plan for confiscating all the landed property of the United Kingdom. Many circumstances doubtless have helped to make this project plausible. The preposterous absurdities of the law relating to real property,



the confusion of mind which is always trying to fix some abstract natural rights, a widespread half-knowledge of the history of England, and a sense of the miseries produced in town and country by a policy of *laissez-faire*, have all contributed to feed this agitation. But its main strength lies in the prospect which nationalization affords of crushing a political party by the imposition of a new tax, of placing an enormous revenue in the hands of those who can gain the ear of the labouring man, and of rescuing everybody from the hard necessity of prudence, diligence, temperance, and self-control.

What is an unearned increment? Who can compute how much of the present value of the land of England is due to improvements made by those who have held it, or in what degree the charge of those improvements was defrayed out of earlier unearned increments, out of real or personal estate? Shall we fix a date, after which all increase in the value of land shall be transferred to the public treasury? At what point of time shall we fix this date? What is the amount of the real and genuine increase in the value of land? Landed property may rise in price, it may yield a larger income; but during the same period the value of gold may be much depreciated; the standard of living, not only among the class of proscribed owners, but throughout the nation, may have risen; new circumstances may bring new necessities and new ideas; so that in the nineteenth century men may not be able to live in comfort and decency upon a revenue which in the fifteenth century would have afforded a surplus to luxury and ostentation. Moreover, landed property may fall as well as rise in value; it may so rise and fall ten times within the life of one generation.

With each rise or fall the capital laid out in developing such property may yield more or less than the average return. If the owner is not to enjoy the benefit, why should he be oppressed with the burthen of chance? His land has in the one case gained, in the other lost value beyond his expectation. If we do not guarantee him against the loss, why should we grudge him the gain?

Why should we talk of unearned increments only in respect of the income accruing from land? If the funds of a foreign State or the shares of a railway at home rise twenty per cent. in one year, is not that an unearned increment? If the pictures of Sandro Botticelli or Cecil Lawson are doubled in market value by the writings of an eloquent and fashionable critic, do not their possessors obtain an unearned increment? If a new canal through the Isthmus of Suez substitutes steamers for sailing-vessels in the Oriental trade, does there not result to the owners of steam-ships an unearned increment? Is there a single act of virtue, a single gleam of intelligence, a single lucky discovery which does not bring unearned increment to many people?

The proscription which overtakes one class of owners must soon overtake all. In England landowners are the most exposed. But on the Continent of Europe, where landowners are strong and numerous, capitalists lie most open to attack. Nobody can doubt that on the Continent the people are much more likely to confiscate capital than to confiscate land. And in every country every owner of property must feel that under the law of unearned increment, chance alone determines whether or no the sort of property held by him shall be confiscated next. So that the proposal to relieve the taxpayer by intercepting the unearned incre-

ment of land would entail all the practical consequences of general confiscation. For the doctrine of the unearned increment involves the idea of property in hopeless confusion. Property has no other guarantee than the public conscience, and the public conscience cannot act forcibly in defence of an object which it cannot apprehend. We have seen in our own time how the doctrine of unearned increments slips into the doctrine of nationalization; and either doctrine applied to any one species of private property, will speedily be applied to all.

It may be alleged that all taxation is really confiscation, that they differ only in degree, and that they can be separated by no impassable line. I answer that differences of degree, although they may be of no account in mathematical, are of the utmost importance in moral science; that the line which divides taxation from confiscation, however invisible to the metaphysic eye, is palpable enough to common sense. It is confiscation to take away the property of one man upon grounds which apply equally to other men whom you leave unmolested. It is confiscation to take away the property of any man, not as a punishment, nor yet in order to make good an overwhelming public necessity, but simply upon the strength of a distinction vague, wavering, and unfixed, a distinction which could be verified only by revising every economic transaction in the long history of a great people, a distinction which could be enforced only by committing numberless acts of injustice, reducing many thousand families to destitution, and introducing an inveterate, incurable, and mortal perplexity into the whole course of business and conduct of life. All this is confiscation, because it is inequitable, because it is irrational, because it defeats every attempt to define rights

or to measure liabilities, because it nips the root of that confidence, in its origin, if you like illogical, but in its effect the principle of whatever prosperity men now enjoy.

No doubt any acknowledged right when urged to its abstract consequences becomes a concrete abuse. No doubt it is only in books of jurisprudence that the right of private property can be stretched into an unlimited right of use and abuse. As land is the most important form of property, so do the powers of landowners call for a temperate use on their part and a careful control on the part of the legislator. Men who abuse the rights of property, and governments who connive at such abuse, end by bringing about a condition of affairs in which all laws must bend to the law of self-preservation. Society will not and should not commit suicide even in defence of the most sacred rights. When law can be enforced only by the general destruction of the subject, then surely it would be folly and guilt to assert the law. In such a case the statesman's task is to arbitrate between factions which cannot be quelled, and to obtain for the vanquished a favourable capitulation. When he has done his best, the beaten party will have much to suffer. But they cannot blame the rulers of the people, to whom the safety of the people must ever be the paramount law.

Such a crisis, however, constitutes a revolution. Revolutions have no rule but necessity, and admit of no justification but success. From the precedents of revolution no wise man will draw maxims for the guidance of society in quiet times. It is the first duty of the statesman to render the methods of revolution obsolete by making them unnecessary. Among these methods confiscation holds the foremost place. As a source of wealth to regular governments, it does not

deserve to be named. As an instrument of social reform, it corrupts the majority by ruining a minority no more guilty than themselves.

In dealing with the problem of taxation we must adopt one of two alternatives. Either we must agree to treat that which every man now possesses as lawfully his own, subject always to the calls which the State may make upon all citizens in proportion to their means, or we must boldly declare that no man has any claim to anything which is not the work of his own hands. The one is the principle upon which all great statesmen have hitherto acted; the other is the principle of pure communism. As compared with all schemes for the partial or total confiscation of private property in land, the theory of communism has the advantage at least in ideal simplicity, and beauty. ✓

If we are to relinquish the principle upon which reposes the whole of our actual civilization, if we are to leave the track of historic development for regions of imagination, it is better to give our imagination full scope and not to lose the pleasures of the ideal whilst forfeiting the advantages of the real. The institution of private property, like every other human institution, cannot but awake very mingled emotions in all reflecting minds. No feeling person can think without grief and shame and indignation of the monotonous, degrading, hopeless, almost unrequited labour to which we owe so much of our wealth, or of the senseless, shameless, pernicious luxury and waste in which so much of that wealth is squandered. But our civilization, with all its vices, is something which few are really prepared to cast away; and our civilization is menaced by every proposal, direct or indirect, to confiscate private property.

In an age of movement and enthusiasm, many upright men are apt to forget that the reformer does not begin to write upon a clean slate. He has to complete the half-written sentence. He has to produce the ideal out of the actual and by the help of the actual. We must admit the continuous life of our society. We must accept as valid the public acts which were valid in the past and on the principles of the past. We may not elude our obligations by saying that the sovereign power of the present time is not constituted in the same way as the sovereign power which created a tenure in the eleventh, or a public debt in the eighteenth century. For political evolution is incessant, and men can have no political life if they will restrict it to the type of the hour. A society which upon every extension of the franchise, every redistribution of seats, every formal or substantial variation in the interdependence of King, Lords, and Commons, every change in the relation of members to their constituents, should claim to be a new society, to remodel rights and duties and make a fresh division of property, might indeed be a society of unprejudiced philosophers, but would return under philosophic forms to the substance of barbaric despotism, in which the sovereign power is the mere embodiment of passionate caprice.

Those who imagine that a change in the political centre of gravity justifies a nation in wiping out history, forget that under the most immovable constitution both subjects and rulers are for ever changing. Our place is appointed for us without our consent. We live by making the best of a lot which we did not choose. We are members of a body which has lived and will go on living through un-

told ages. Did we not accept the burthen of this destiny, did we not ratify the acts of men whom we could not control, and with whom we could have but few thoughts in common, did we not trust that what we have done in respect to them others will do in respect to us, the spiritual tie would be broken, mankind would be reduced to a mob, progress would be impossible, and civilization, happiness, and life itself would come to a speedy end. Nor has any generation the right to murmur against these responsibilities. Each successive generation owes its strength and its glory to this sacred confidence. This unspoken, unwritten, but fundamental understanding secures every man's place in the history of mankind. The affection and the duty which bind us to the past and the future are as strong, as sweet, as much beyond price as the duty and affection which bind us to our kindred and our friends. Rights which our society has long acknowledged and long enforced may find no place in the ideal society; but when they must be extinguished, our humanity, our honour, and our conscience are all interested in making sure that every citizen contributes to indemnify those who have offended merely in acting upon the moral ideas and in obedience to the positive laws of their country.

In a certain sense it may be said that we have to be even more cautious in dealing with property than in dealing with life. Few even of the most depraved have any keen or unmixed delight in spilling blood. Rarely in modern times can the death of an innocent man further the ambition of a minister, gratify the revenge of a priest, or add a new sensation to the pleasures of the people. But in modern times a thousand unconfessed motives urge us to increase

taxation and to tax individuals or classes. An enlarged revenue promises to the minister patronage and influence; to the civil servant an ampler remuneration; to the upper and middle classes a wider range of appointments; to the working man increased employment; to all who suffer, and to all who pity suffering, the means of vast social amelioration. And when men come to feel that an enlarged revenue means heavier contributions, they are likely to cast about for criminals to fine. It is so pleasant at once to save your money, to punish the scourges of society, and without any labour or self-denial of your own to enjoy all the luxuries of a gratified social sensibility.

That the age in which democracy has triumphed should also be the age of enormous public burthens need cause no surprise. In our age taxation must increase. The execution of great public improvements demands a great public expenditure. The intelligent will do better service by trying to direct than by trying to suppress the costly energy of imperial and municipal authorities. But it behoves us all to be cautious, circumspect, and critical in approving any new imposition. We should remember how little any government can be trusted with superfluous wealth; the certainty of waste and the probability of corruption. We should remember that the benevolence of our intentions does not relieve us from the ungracious duty of economy. The mechanical improvements of the nineteenth century have suddenly multiplied our resources. But the only perennial fountain of riches, public or private, is frugality. Wind as we may, we always come back to the necessity of self-command. If we do not understand that necessity, we are the poorer for all our wealth. We are but

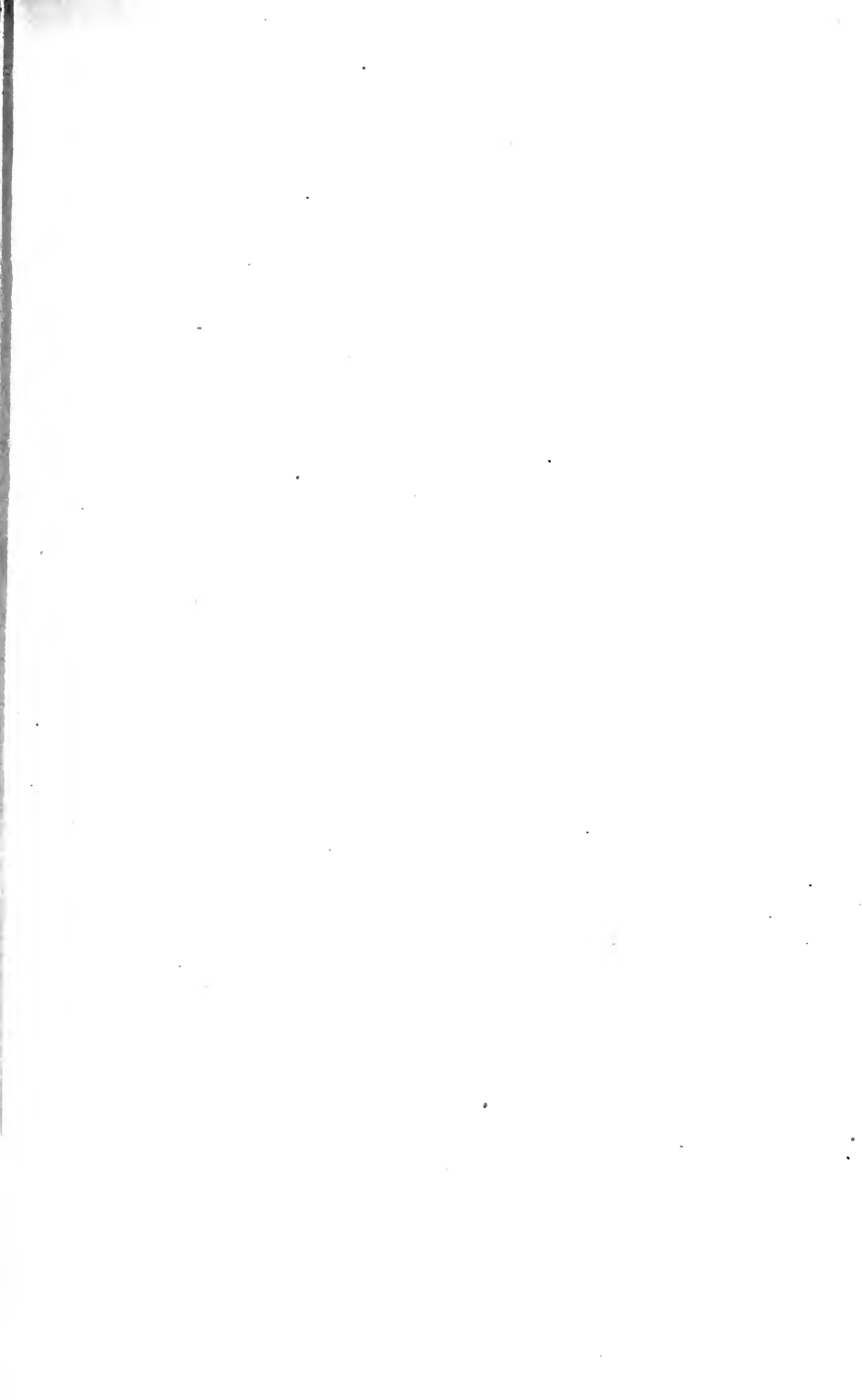


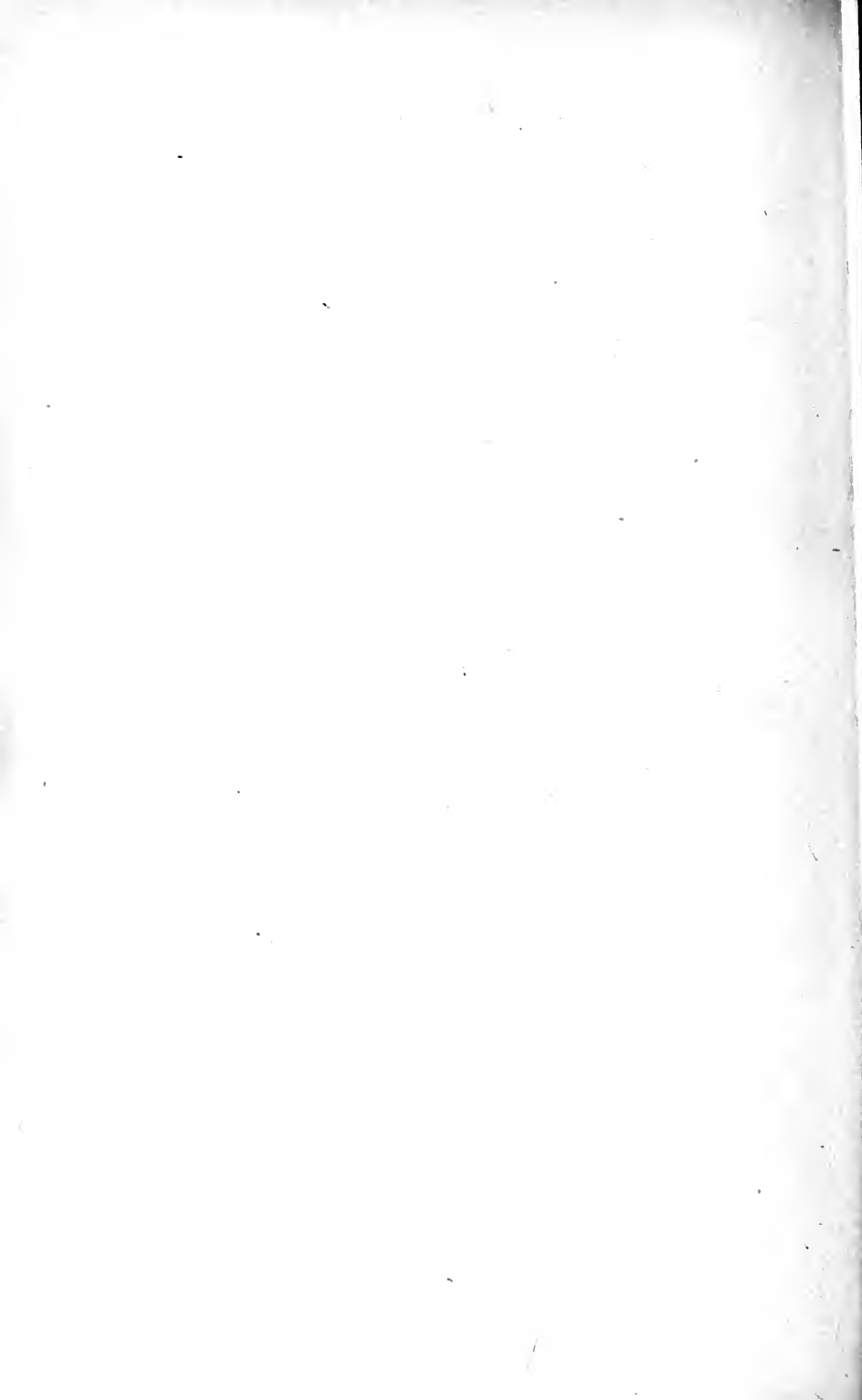
playing with doubled stakes a game that must end in ruin and dishonour. Most fatally shall we err if we try to remedy the effects of national profusion, or even the deep-seated maladies of our social system by toying with methods which must enslave all who adopt them. Let us not surrender our common sense and common justice to any impulse either of mean envy or of noble indignation. So long as we intend to respect private property at all, let us respect it in every shape. Or if, indeed, the distinctions between various kinds of private property are so deep as some suppose, let us not use those distinctions merely to colour our political passions, and to destroy in the name of political justice whole classes and categories of our fellow-countrymen.

We need not and we should not accept as final the economic conditions of our own time. Far from rejecting the ideal of a fair day's work for a fair day's wages, we may well regard it as the acme of all social arrangements. It is quite true that those who preach this ideal sometimes forget the very different value of different kinds of work. Work which directly produces wealth may be ten thousand times less valuable than the work of those who can really govern or teach. But upon this understanding that service is to be justly appraised, there can be no objection to paying every man in proportion to his services.

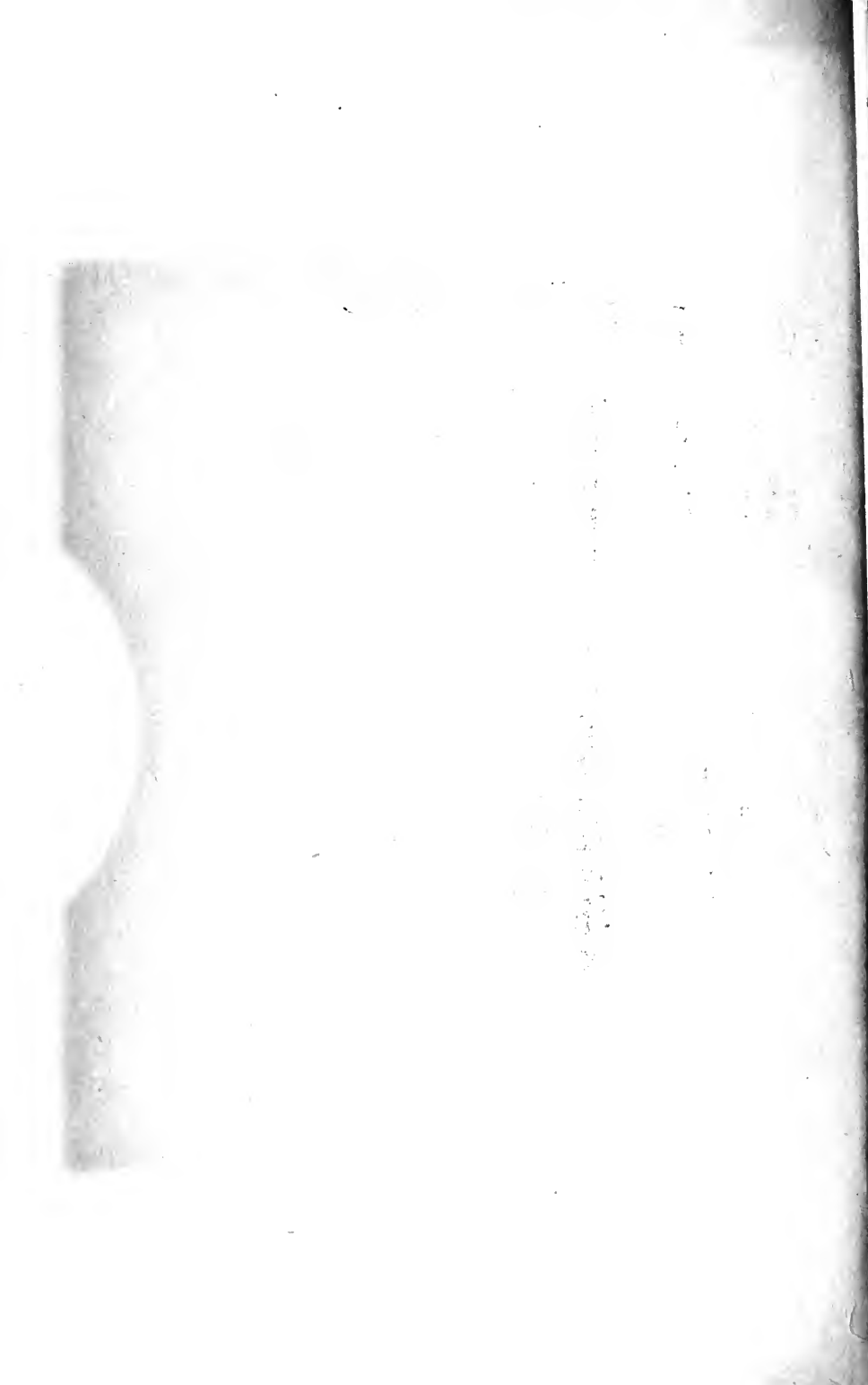
Nor, if we believe in this ideal, need we sit still with folded hands, waiting for evil to evolve good. Only we must understand the complexity of our problem. We must not think by any single measure to establish a perfectly just society. Least of all may we hope to do so by any arbitrary transfer of property. A society in which every man is valued at his true worth, and all worthy men are brothers, is

not so easy to be established. Before such a society can come into being, men must put forth an intelligence, a temperance, an industry, and a public spirit which have never been witnessed in past history. For it is folly to think that a moral transformation of the whole can be effected without a moral transformation of the parts. Ignorant, coarse, and selfish as nearly all men have always been, no mere mechanical readjustment of wealth or power can order them into a wise, refined, and disinterested society. All that the highest political wisdom can effect is to supply conditions under which this individual transformation may become possible to all men. The rest is the task of morality and religion.









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